the weekly Standard

JULY 5 / JULY 12, 2010

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Death of a Terrorist

There was a very brief, one column/two-inch obituary in the *Washington Post* last week, which caught our attention: "Dwight Armstrong," the headline read. And then the sub-headline: "Vietnam War Protester." A slight chill went down the spine of THE SCRAPBOOK.

Of course, everybody knows that Vietnam war protesters were shaggy-haired kids who marched with signs and chanted, pretended to "levitate" the Pentagon, faced down National Guardsmen, or burned symbolic draft cards and flashed the peace sign in a crusade to force the withdrawal of American troops from Southeast Asia. Most went back to school once the draft ended, the troops were withdrawn, and South Vietnam fell. Some ended up in politics, or as public defenders or environmental activists, or teaching philosophy, getting married, raising kids, earning a living—but always with that little flame of idealism still burning.

Well, if Dwight Armstrong was a "Vietnam War Protester" then Major Nidal Malik Hasan should be known to posterity as a "Fort Hood Psychiatrist." Armstrong was, in fact, a dropout/drifter and left-wing activist who, in 1970 with his brother Karl and two friends, parked a stolen van packed with explosives and jet fuel beside a laboratory building at the University of Wisconsin, and lit the fuse. The resulting explosion killed

Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin

a young student-researcher named Robert Fassnacht and injured three other people.

Armstrong became a fugitive but was captured in Canada in 1977, tried and convicted, and served a total of seven years in federal prison. He died of lung cancer at 58 in the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison, not far from the scene of his now largely forgotten crime.

It is often suggested that race—a reaction to the civil rights movement of the 1960s—was the predominant cause of a rightward shift in American politics in the 1970s and '80s. Of course, race has always played a role in shaping the national mood; but it is useful to remember that many things happened in American society of that era, and among them were periodic breakdowns in the social and political order, destructive urban riots, and a radical antiwar movement that nurtured a certain amount of violence and murder. The antiwar movement was predominantly peaceful, of course; but it is important to remember that violence—vandalism, armed assaults, bombings—was part of the movement as well, and that made a deep impression on Americans at the time.

The late Dwight Armstrong was not a Vietnam war protester; he was a domestic terrorist and unrepentant killer who paid a small price for a calculated act of cruelty, and assault on a great American university. Robert Fassnacht, R.I.P. ♦

The *Post*'s Idea of a Conservative

When the *Washington Post* hired Dave Weigel to produce a reported blog on conservatives and Republicans, management apparently did so because they were under the misimpression that Weigel is a conservative, or at least a libertarian who's not hostile to conservatives and their ideas. In an online chat, the *Post*'s national editor, Kevin Merida, was asked whether the newspaper planned to hire any conservatives to balance its growing stable of left-wing opinion reporters. Merida noted that the *Post* had "added to our staff the well-regarded Dave Weigel" and mentioned the paper's handful of right-leaning columnists.

So what kind of balance did Weigel provide? Not much. Weigel was a member of a now-defunct 400-person email group known as JournoList. The politics of the group were decidedly left-wing, and although the messages they sent each other were supposed to be off-the-record—well, we are talking about 400 snarky lefties. Leaks happen. In this case, a smattering of Weigel's emails ended up being published on two websites, FishbowlDC and the *Daily Caller*.

They showed Weigel to be a proponent of the tired old all-Republicans-are-racists trope. He accused the party of protecting "white privilege" and of using the media to "violently, angrily divide America." He also complained about his beat. "Honestly, it's been tough to find fresh angles sometimes—how many times can I report that these [tea party] activists are joyfully signing up with the agenda of discredited right-winger X and discredited right-wing group Y?"

There was standard-issue liberal name-calling: Newt Gingrich is an "amoral blowhard," Rush Limbaugh should drop dead of a heart attack,

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Matt Drudge is an "amoral shut-in" who should "set himself on fire"—in short, the kind of playground bluster that passes for wit in liberal circles (and, for that matter, got Al Franken elected to the U.S. Senate).

More surprising, for a writer supposedly hired for his libertarian leanings, his steadfast support for the massive government expansion of health care under this administration led him to repeatedly apply his epithet of choice—ratf#$%ers—to Obamacare opponents like Sarah Palin. In May, he briefly got in trouble with his bosses for tweeting, "I can empathize with everyone I cover except for the anti-gay marriage bigots." But it turns out that he really couldn't empathize with anyone but his JournoList comrades—and unfortunately for him at least one of his fellow JournoListers couldn't empathize with him.

So Weigel considers social conservatives "bigots," Republicans racists, he favors government-run health care and scorns those with different views. None of this should be surprising, considering how Weigel came to occupy his perch on the *Washington Post*'s website. Weigel got his job thanks to a recommendation from his friend, left-wing *Washington Post* writer Ezra Klein, who also happens to be the founder of the JournoList. And Klein told *Politico*'s Ben Smith that Weigel is "hard to characterize politically." Of course, Klein said this after many of Weigel's snarky, anti-conservative emails had been distributed by his own JournoList.

Did Klein misrepresent Weigel to his new bosses at the *Washington Post*? That's unclear. The real comedy of this whole episode is that there's not a dime's worth of difference between Weigel's political views, however pungently expressed in what he believed were private emails, and those of his colleagues and bosses at the *Post*. Unfortunately for Weigel, the *Post* believed he was a diversity hire, someone they could point to whenever conservatives complained about ideological imbalance at the paper. His emails undermined their talking-point. They wanted a reporter who would allow them to maintain the fiction that they run a balanced newsroom. He embarrassed them by holding opinions indistinguishable from their own.

Well, you can't embarrass your bosses like that. Late last week, the *Post* accepted Weigel's resignation, perhaps hoping that doing so would bring to an end this embarrassing episode. The editors of the *Post* may have some hard questions to ask Ezra Klein, who had been reading Weigel's anti-conservative tirades for some time before telling his editors that Weigel would be "the best reporter" on the conservative beat. But The Scrapbook hopes they'll show a little understanding. From Klein's end of the political spectrum, pretty much everyone else looks conservative. ♦

The Making of Sausages

It's not often that The Scrapbook feels the need to quote directly (much less approvingly) from a press release emailed from an elected official. In fact, it's not often that we read such emails. But this little item from the June 25 "Morning Whip Up" from House Minority Whip (get it?) Eric Cantor's office caught our attention, and it's worth yours:

> After reaching an agreement early this morning on FinReg [Financial Regulatory Reform], departing Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) was on a roll, telling the *Wall Street Journal*, "this is about as important as it gets, because it deals with every single aspect of our lives." Dodd also told the [Washington] *Post*, "no

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one will know until this is actually in place how it works." So in summary, (1) the legislation will affect every aspect of our lives, and (2) no one has any idea how it will work. That's par for the course in Obama's Washington—getting a new engine, tires and transmission when all you need is an oil change. ♦

July 4 Weekend Reading

Looking for some good reading on or about July 4—after, of course, you've reread the Declaration of Independence, supplemented by Jefferson's June 24, 1826, moving letter to Roger Weightman? The Scrapbook has two recommendations—one fun and light, the other also fun but a bit more serious.

The first is the new novel by Douglas MacKinnon, *Vengeance Is Mine*, available from Amazon.com. MacKinnon is a conservative who's worked at the White House and the Pentagon. He's also a good thriller writer, who's crafted an interesting and captivating tale of a politically incorrect private investigator who isn't shy about wearing his conservatism on his sleeve as he takes on the bad guys. Tony Blankley calls the book "a thriller for the Tea Party generation," and so it is—and one especially suited for reading on or around Independence Day.

The second is the summer issue of *National Affairs*, the fourth appearance of the new quarterly edited by Yuval Levin. *National Affairs* goes from strength to strength. Here you get guidance from James Capretta and others on how Obamacare can be repealed and replaced, thoughtful essays by Henry Olsen and William Schambra about American populism and American conservatism, Harvard's Greg Mankiw on "Crisis Economics," and much more. The essays are accessible, interesting, and important.

The Scrapbook's recommendation: Alternate articles from *National Affairs* with chapters from *Vengeance Is Mine*. Fun and educational! Have a good Fourth; we'll be back in two weeks. ♦

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Little Van, Big House

Having safely deposited our daughter in Williamstown, Massachusetts, for the summer, my alluring wife and I decided to shunpike our way back home to Washington—a picturesque way to describe avoiding metropolitan New York, Interstate 95, the New Jersey Turnpike, and their attendant horrors. This meant descending south from the Berkshires into rural New York State on the east bank of the Hudson River. It also meant finding ourselves, unexpectedly, in the middle of the 1830s.

The quiet, two-lane highway that transported us across the line from Massachusetts into Columbia County, New York, was considerably more rural in character than I had anticipated. In Hancock, Massachusetts, we stopped at a small, slightly overgrown, cemetery, enclosed in a rusted iron fence, whose oldest gravestones dated from the late 18th century. Although we were closing in on some early Dutch settlements and Washington Irving country, the names were all English, and the tombstones featured those postmortem exhortations you tend to find in New England: *Death is a debt / To Nature due / Which I have paid / And soon must you.* That was on the headstone of a woman who had died at my present age.

In fact, so pleasant was the driving, and so somnolent the villages and tiny farms, that we got lost somewhere in Columbia County and pulled into an intersection to inspect the road sign. It indicated that, if we made the appropriate turn, we would soon find ourselves in the town of Kinderhook. That was enough for me.

As every schoolboy around the time of the Civil War could have told you, our eighth president, Martin Van Buren, was known in his day as Old Kinderhook—there is a theory, in fact, that the expression "OK" derives from the phrase—based on the name of his hometown. And so, on the assumption that there might be some remnant of Van Buren still extant in the place, we headed there.

I should begin by saying that, Old Kinderhook aside, the town is immensely charming, a few miles east of the river, with a plentiful supply of elegant Georgian and Hudson River Bracketed houses—and, to satisfy my mortuary needs, a graceful Dutch Reformed cemetery, full of Stuyvesants and Van Santvoords and

DARREN GYGI

Vliets—and Martin Van Buren and his family. Signs along the main road directed us to the Van Buren homestead, called Lindenwald, now owned by the National Park Service.

I should also say that the mere survival of Martin Van Buren's residence is a story in itself. It went out of the family shortly after his death in 1862, and was recovered from private ownership—and a history as boarding house, commercial establishment, and storage facility—as recently as the 1970s. The cast-iron tub in which the president bathed was found in an outlying field—a trough for horses—and the Parisian wallpaper he had installed in 1839 was revealed under decades of grime. Van Buren seems to have had an eye for gadgetry, and by an architectural miracle, his wood-paneled flushing toilet, metal pipes, and assorted built-in devices, had remained untouched or been buried in additions. A surprising number of family furnishings also survived in the region or in households of innumerable Van Buren descendants.

I confess to mixed feelings about the National Park Service and guided tours, but the docent who led our knot of five visitors around—a retired middle school English teacher named Lou Miressi—was entertaining company. Long resident in Hyde Park—President Franklin Roosevelt's hometown down the valley in Dutchess County—he explained, in answer to my question, that he was originally from the Bronx. (As I had guessed, listening to his singular inflections.) Best of all, he was the ideal interlocutor for somebody like Martin Van Buren: An unabashed enthusiast of the house and its historic occupant, full of stories and details of the president's life and career, he was a uniformed evangelist for America's eighth president.

History has been more neglectful than hostile to Van Buren. Andrew Jackson's faithful protégé, a founder of the modern Democratic party, and first boss of the New York machine, he served one presidential term (1837-41), and it was blighted by the Panic of 1837. He was defeated for reelection by the Whig William Henry Harrison, lost the Democratic nomination in 1844 to James Knox Polk of Tennessee, and ran a fourth time in 1848 on the Free Soil ticket. A transitional figure between the towering Jackson and the pre-Civil War presidents, Martin Van Buren has a place in the history of American political parties, though not particularly as a representative of any doctrine or policy.

His residence, however, is no small monument, and walking along its tilted floors, and up and down the narrow staircase, I sensed the 5′6″ specter of Little Van.

Philip Terzian

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Israel: An Apartheid State?

Is there any truth at all in this oft-repeated calumny?

Only a short time ago, many universities, goaded by left-wing professors and students and their substantial Muslim student bodies, "celebrated" Israel Apartheid Week in which divestiture from, boycott of and sanctions against Israel were demanded. Is there any truth, any justification at all in this odious characterization?

What are the facts?

South African Apartheid. "Apartheid," the Dutch-Africaans term for separation, was the social order of the former South Africa. It meant exactly that. The Black majority of the nation and the so-called Colored were kept strictly apart in all aspects of life. White domination over the native population was mandatory. For instance: Non-Whites had to carry a "passbook." Passbook infringement could lead to deportation to one of the Bantu "homelands." Blacks and Coloreds were being kept from a wide array of jobs. Black-White sex was a serious jail-time criminal offense. Hospitals and ambulances were strictly separated. Whites enjoyed free education until graduation. Not so for Blacks, whose education was strictly limited by the oppressive "Bantu Education Act."

By law, no mixed sports were allowed. Park benches, swimming pools, libraries, and movies were strictly separated. Blacks were not allowed to purchase or imbibe alcoholic drinks – etc, etc, etc. And that is only a partial and small list of the many abusive impediments that non-Whites suffered under the South African apartheid regime.

Israeli Equality. To tar Israel with that kind of brush is utterly malicious. The exact opposite is the case. Not one single apartheid practice applies to Israel. Israel is by far the most racially mixed and tolerant nation in the entire Muslim Middle East. Arabs, who are about 20% of Israel's population, enjoy, without any exception, the same rights and opportunities in all fields as their Jewish fellow citizens. The total equality of all Israelis is assured in Israel's founding document. All non-Jews (which means primarily Muslim Arabs) have full voting rights. At present, eleven Arabs sit in Israel's Knesset (parliament): Three Arabs are deputy speakers. Arabs are represented in Israel's diplomatic service all over the world. Arab students may and do study in all Israeli universities. All children in Israel are entitled to subsidized education until graduation, without any restrictions based on color or religions. In short, Muslim Arabs and other non-Jews are allowed everything that Jews are allowed, everything that non-Whites were not allowed in apartheid South Africa.

But, yes, there is one difference: Jewish Israeli men are obligated to a three-year stint in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and serve in the reserve until they are 50 years old. For Arabs, this service is voluntary. Except for the Druze, hardly any Arabs volunteer to serve in the armed forces.

> "To call Israel an apartheid state is an expression of ignorance, anti-Semitism, and malice."

Israel has granted permanent residence and full citizen rights to a large number of legal and illegal foreign workers and their families – from the Philippines, Eritrea, Colombia, Nigeria, and from many other countries. Nobody, of course, is forced or requested to convert to Judaism as a condition of their being allowed to stay. Israel has accepted a shipload of Vietnamese refugees who had sought asylum. No Arab country has accepted a single one of those refugees. Israel has brought in about 70,000 black Ethiopian Jews, who despite their backwardness have become fully integrated citizens of Israel. Everything that Blacks were not allowed to do in South Africa is totally open to non-Jews in Israel.

The "Apartheid Wall." Another reason for which left-wing zealots and anti-Semites like to refer to Israel as the "apartheid state" is the fence between Israel proper and the territories. This fence (which is indeed a fence and not a wall over most of its length) was constructed at great cost in order to prevent the suicidal attacks that had killed hundreds of Israelis and grievously wounded thousands more. Thankfully, this "wall" is exceptionally successful and has totally prevented any such attacks since its completion. There is little question that this separation fence is the cause of inconvenience for some of the Arab population. But it is an annoyance that they have brought about themselves. And, of course, there are walls for protection all over the world. The Chinese invented it hundreds of years ago. Our own country has a long, high, very sophisticated wall across our border with Mexico. It is a wall, not to keep out criminals who want to kill Americans, but people who want to come here only in search of a better life. To call the Israeli fence an "apartheid wall" is an expression of ignorance and of malevolence.

Israel is a light unto the nations. It has, regrettably, many enemies – all or most of the world's Muslim nations and left-wing ideologues who mostly hate the United States and who consider Israel to be America's cat's-paw in the Middle East. The reality, of course, is that Israel is the exact opposite of an apartheid state. It is a country in which all residents, all citizens, enjoy the same full rights. All other countries in the Middle East are benighted theocracies, ruthless tyrannies, or mostly both. To call Israel an apartheid state is an expression of ignorance, anti-Semitism, and malice.

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the weekly Standard

Obama's Choice

Let us now praise Barack Obama.

Someone should. The left, weary of the effort in Afghanistan, is uneasy about the appointment of General David Petraeus to replace General Stanley McChrystal—sensing that this was not the action of a president laying the groundwork for getting out. Conservatives, deeply (and correctly) suspicious of much of the rest of Obama's foreign policy, can't quite bring themselves to believe that the president may actually be doing the right thing.

But he is. Petraeus would not have taken the extraordinary step down the chain of command to take direct control in Afghanistan if he weren't convinced that the mission, appropriately managed and resourced, can be accomplished—and that the president is committed to success. Petraeus doesn't intend to supervise a holding action for a decent interval until retreat and defeat.

So Petraeus will modify the campaign plan, review the rules of engagement (or at least their implementation), and generally upgrade the military counterinsurgency effort. Will the president for his part move to make the needed changes on the civilian side to complement Petraeus's actions? For now, Obama seems willing only to hint that he's unhappy with the pathetic ankle-biting and turf wars that characterize the tenures of Afghanistan-Pakistan special envoy Richard Holbrooke and ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry. The president will replace them, sooner rather than later.

Can we be confident that Obama is really going for victory? I think so. Consider his speech Wednesday, when he announced the replacement of McChrystal with Petraeus. After referring to our "vital mission" in Afghanistan, to doing "whatever is necessary to succeed in Afghanistan, and in our broader effort to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda," he urged us "to remember what this is all about. Our nation is at war. We face a very tough fight in Afghanistan. But Americans don't flinch in the face of difficult truths or difficult tasks. We persist and we persevere."

Obama didn't say we persist and we persevere—but only until July 2011. Indeed, Obama never mentioned that date, and he never mentioned withdrawal.

The next day, at a press conference with Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, Obama was asked whether the change in command in Afghanistan altered his "timetable for withdrawal." In response, he reiterated that, above all,

> we had to be very clear on our mission. Our mission, first and foremost, is to dismantle and destroy al Qaeda and its affiliates so that they can't attack the United States. . . . In order to achieve that, we have to make sure that we have a stable Afghan government, and we also have to make sure that we've got a Pakistani government that is working effectively with us to dismantle these networks.

He went on to explain that he had ordered additional troops to Afghanistan "to provide the time and the space for the Afghan government to build up its security capacities, to clear and hold population centers that are critical, to drive back the Taliban, to break their momentum." And that "next year we would begin a transition phase in which the Afghan government is taking more and more responsibility for its own security."

So there's still an intention—as there also was during Bush's surge in Iraq—ultimately to hand over more responsibility to the locals. But Obama hastened to add:

> We did not say that starting July 2011, suddenly there would be no troops from the United States or allied countries in Afghanistan. We didn't say we'd be switching off the lights and closing the door behind us. What we said is we'd begin a transition phase in which the Afghan government is taking on more and more responsibility.

The only thing Obama could have done to more dramatically minimize the significance of the July 2011 date would have been explicitly to repudiate it. He should do that, and in a few months he may.

Compare Obama to his chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, speaking just a few days earlier on ABC's *This Week*. Emanuel stressed that July 2011 is

> a firm date. . . . What will be determined at that date or going into that date will be the scale and scope of that reduction. . . . The July 2011 date, as stated by the president, that's not moving. That's not changing. . . . And the goal is to take this opportunity, focus on what needs to get done, and then on July 2011, begin the reduction of troops.

Emanuel's comments now seem, post-McChrystal, no longer operative. And with the timetable mostly de-fanged, with July 2011 as the beginning of a "transition phase," with Petraeus in charge and more changes to come—Emanuel and the antiwar forces within the administration have lost. As a result, Afghanistan can now be won.

—*William Kristol*

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The Blunt Truth

He should win the Missouri Senate race.

BY FRED BARNES

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Columbia, Missouri

Dennis Hastert, the former House speaker, is gone from Washington and pretty much forgotten. In February, his son lost a bid for his father's old seat. The last we heard of ex-majority leader Tom DeLay, he was briefly a contestant on the TV show *Dancing with the Stars*. But former whip Roy Blunt, the third member of the Republican triumvirate that ruled the House of Representatives until 2005, has survived. He's running for the Senate from Missouri, and more likely than not he'll win.

Missouri is a swing state, usually reflecting the national political mood. It's a hodgepodge. "St. Louis is sometimes described as the westernmost eastern city," Blunt says. "Kansas City is more like Denver. The Boot Heel [southeast Missouri] is like the Delta. Southwest Missouri is more like Oklahoma and even Texas. Northern Missouri is more like the upper Midwest."

So it's no surprise the race here epitomizes Senate and House races across the country. Blunt, like Republicans nationwide, has been rejuvenated by the rise of his party's fortunes and campaigns as an unswerving conservative. Like other Democrats, Robin Carnahan, the Missouri secretary of state, is also running sharply to the right—against Washington, big government, excessive spending—and concentrates on demonizing Blunt.

She's avoided contact with President Obama. When he came to Missouri in March, Carnahan's excuse was she had to be in Washington for several fundraisers. She attended his speech in rural Macon in April, but stayed in the crowd and didn't have her picture taken with him. Obama is scheduled to return in July to raise money for her. She'll have to attend that event.

Whatever the audience, Carnahan, 48, attacks Blunt. She and Blunt addressed the state VFW convention recently. Carnahan devoted much of her speech to lambasting Blunt. His was entirely on veterans and national security issues.

Afterwards, reporter David Lieb of the Associated Press buttonholed the candidates, asking their views of the new nuclear arms control agreement with the Russians. Later, he sent this report on Twitter: "In Missouri Senate race, Blunt urges rejection of US-Russia nuclear arms treaty. Carnahan takes no position."

Blunt aides say Carnahan wants voters to know only three things about her: that she's from a small town, goes to a Baptist church, and owns a farm. She says Blunt's 14 years in the House make him a Washington "insider," while she offers "independent leadership." Her website boasts

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Carnahan was selected by "one of the nation's leading nonpartisan think tanks" as one of 20 government leaders able "to work across party lines to get things done."

But she's no stranger to Washington or to partisan, liberal Democratic politics. Her brother, Russ, is a House member. Her mother, Jean, was a U.S. senator. Her father, Mel, was a two-term governor who was killed in a plane crash while campaigning for the Senate in 2000.

If Carnahan is the most famous name in Missouri politics, Blunt is number two. Blunt, 60, was elected secretary of state in 1984, the first Republican to win the post in more than 50 years, and was reelected in 1988. He lost a bid for governor in 1992, but his son Matt was elected governor in 2004, retiring after a single term.

When Republican senator Kit Bond decided he wouldn't seek reelection this fall, the first person he notified was Roy Blunt. His immediate response, Blunt says, was to tell Bond that he should run again. "He's the only living guy who's won seven statewide campaigns," four for Senate, one for auditor, two for governor. Bond demurred. Six weeks later, in February 2009, Blunt announced he was running for the Senate.

"I knew it had to be done," he says. "Frankly, I thought I was the only one who could get it done. It's an important moment for the country that is becoming more obvious to the people every day. We're making a generational decision about the country."

In his stump speeches, Blunt asks this question: "Do you want a country where the government is bigger than the people or a country where the people are bigger than the government?" It's a loaded question, for sure. But it cleverly taps into voters' legitimate fears about mushrooming government in Washington.

Blunt's candidacy initially stirred more skepticism than enthusiasm among Republicans. His years as a Republican leader in Washington were seen as a drawback. Republicans lost 30 seats in 2006 (plus control of the House) and another 21 in 2008. It's now conventional wisdom among conservatives that Republicans had "lost their way," particularly by spending excessively.

Carnahan is eager to exploit the spending issue. She touts her plan to "stop what's wrong with Washington [by] cracking down on wasteful spending." It includes a ban on earmarks and bank bailouts, a presidential line item veto, and spending caps.

Blunt is dismissive of Carnahan on spending. "I don't think anybody in Missouri believes that Robin Carnahan will spend less money than I will," he says. Tea party activists and small government conservatives are another story. Blunt hasn't solidified their support yet, but his speeches are honed to appeal to them.

He voted for only half the TARP bailout of banks in 2008, and most of that $350 billion has been paid back,

Turn Off the Tax Faucet

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Congress and the administration are desperate to tap sources of tax revenue wherever and whenever they can find them to help pay for costly government programs. Unfairly, and more often than not, the business community is caught in the crosshairs.

A case in point is The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act—sometimes referred to as the "jobs bill"—now before Congress. This legislation would extend unemployment benefits and renew important expired business tax provisions, including the R&E tax credit. To pay for itself, however, the bill calls for a laundry list of permanent tax increases on businesses in exchange for temporary tax extenders, including tax increases on small businesses—America's job creators.

One of the legislation's most alarming provisions is a payroll tax on certain individuals and small businesses that form S-corporations. Under current law, owners of S-corporation service-sector companies—such as architectural and accounting firms—don't pay taxes at the company level; rather, the owners pay personal income taxes on the business profits as a shareholder in the company. Increasing taxes on fully compliant small business owners and making the tax code even more complex would not inspire confidence in our nation's primary job creators.

The bill would also punish U.S. firms that do business overseas by limiting the foreign tax credits that they can claim for income taxes paid to other countries. This proposal amounts to a tax hike that would hinder the ability of American worldwide companies to compete globally, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth.

In addition, the legislation would raise taxes on the successful investments of private equity, hedge, and venture funds. The result would be scaled-back investments in small businesses and diminished innovation in real estate, energy, and other critical sectors of the economy.

In short, the jobs bill targets businesses as an unending funding source for the administration and Congress. The legislation's one step forward, two steps back approach would be counterproductive to job creation, heightened U.S. competitiveness, and economic growth.

Though the economy needs Congress to extend expiring tax relief, it can't afford the permanent tax hikes called for in this bill. In these fragile economic times, with nearly 1 in 10 Americans jobless, it would be the height of economic folly to target business—or any group of Americans—for a major tax increase. Congress, instead, should scrap these proposed taxes and work on pro-growth economic initiatives that would let businesses of all sizes create jobs and grow the economy.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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he says. And he's always voted for the budget with the least amount of spending. When he was majority leader for 100 days after DeLay stepped down, he engineered a $40 billion cut in entitlement spending. He also secured funding for 700 miles of fence along the border with Mexico.

"If there were one big thing we could go back and do again," he told me, "it would be to insist we have fights over spending. We were so focused on the responsibility [to prevent another terrorist attack] that we didn't have the veto fights." Had President Bush vetoed "a series" of spending bills, "the Republican party would be in better shape today and so would the country." Republicans had the votes to sustain vetoes, Blunt says.

So far, Blunt has out-campaigned Carnahan. When he addressed a business group in Columbia recently, it was his 500th campaign event. The next day, he completed his tour of Missouri's 114 counties and St. Louis. He's waiting until he and Carnahan go head-to-head after the August primary to air television ads. Liberal groups have spent at least $1.3 million against him, but their TV spots are so over-the-top—in one, the Blunt character drips with oil from his hands and feet—that they appear to have had little effect.

Most analysts of congressional races—Larry Sabato, Nate Silver, Stuart Rothenberg—give Blunt a slight edge over Carnahan, as they should. The doubts among Republicans about Blunt have dissolved. Despite misgivings, the tea party crowd is likely to embrace him. "The reality of the race is that Roy Blunt is the only opportunity to hold on to Kit Bond's seat," says conservative talk radio host Mike Ferguson.

Missouri is never an easy state for Republicans. But John McCain narrowly defeated Obama there in 2008, and this year the main issues—the economy, jobs, spending, the deficit, debt—are Republican strengths. "As far as I know, Robin Carnahan and I don't agree on anything," Blunt says. "It's not complicated." ♦

A Good General Is Not Enough

Winning in Afghanistan will also require pressure on Pakistan. BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

As General David Petraeus takes over the war in Afghanistan from General Stanley McChrystal, he faces a daunting set of challenges. Thirty years of fighting have taken their toll on the country. Afghanistan is a backwards place with little infrastructure. The heroin capital of the world, its opium fields are a rich source of income for the Taliban and its allies. The country is rife with corruption and tribalism.

To make matters worse, the Afghan government is shaky. President Hamid Karzai is expressing doubts that America can win and hedging his bets. He has entertained the idea of a deal with the Taliban. Two of Karzai's most pro-American subordinates, including his intelligence chief, resigned earlier this month.

General Petraeus knows all of this. "I've always said that Afghanistan would be the tougher fight," he remarked in late 2008. Last year Petraeus and McChrystal together developed a counterinsurgency strategy—based on the one that brought Iraq back from the brink—to suit the peculiarities of Afghanistan.

But Petraeus and U.S. forces cannot do it alone. The fight for Afghanistan requires, as President Obama himself noted earlier this week, "a unity of purpose on the part of all branches of the U.S. government that reflects the enormous sacrifices that are being made by the young men and women who are there." Such unity of purpose is essential to dealing with one of the most serious challenges facing Afghanistan today: Pakistan.

Thomas Joscelyn is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Many of Afghanistan's woes can be traced to its southern neighbor. Pakistan provided crucial counterterrorism assistance in the post-September 11 world—September 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and other high-level al Qaeda operatives would not have been captured in Pakistan without the assistance of local authorities. But the Pakistani government remains divided and duplicitous. For years, its powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency has nurtured jihadist organizations and exported terrorism to Afghanistan, Kashmir, and India as part of its foreign policy. Some parts of the ISI are on our side. Others are not. That's why President Obama said on Thursday that in addition to making sure "we have a stable Afghan government" in the fight against terrorism, "we also have to make sure that we've got a Pakistani government that is working effectively with us to dismantle these networks."

This requires consistent diplomatic and political pressure on the Pakistani government. Petraeus and the military can exert some of this pressure through their liaison relationship with the Pakistani military—America provides training for the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment, and supplies the armed forces. This provides some of the levers needed. But a concerted effort by State Department and intelligence officials, and President Obama himself, is needed as well.

Obama has not been negligent in this regard. A recent study by RAND notes that President Obama sent a letter to Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari that "bluntly warned that Pakistan's use of militant groups to pursue its policy goals would no longer be tolerated."

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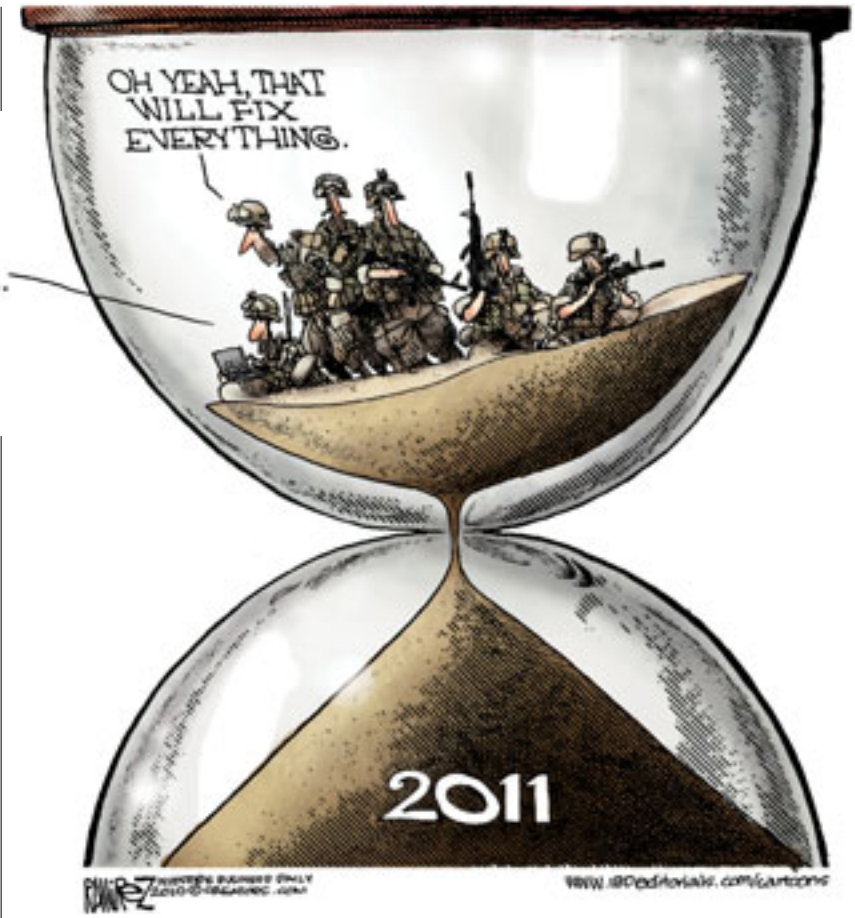
It is not clear what, exactly, this means absent concrete action, or even if Zardari could rein in the ISI should he want to. But Obama, according to RAND, also "offered additional military and economic assistance, as well as help in easing tensions with India."

Looming over America's military and diplomatic efforts is the withdrawal timetable. It does not matter that the July 2011 date for the beginning of the draw-down is more nuanced than a complete "switching off the lights and closing the door behind us," as President Obama said on Thursday. The arbitrary date sends the message that America's commitment is limited. Those in the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment who support the Afghan insurgents do so because they see them as a means to project power in Afghanistan. The timetable tells the Pakistanis that support for the Taliban and their ilk may be rewarded in the not distant future.

Afghanistan is a contest of wills. President Obama insists that Pakistan must give up its support for militant groups, but the July 2011 deadline undercuts his efforts. The deadline indicates that America may not have the will necessary to fight for its own interests, which differ in important respects from Pakistan's.



The three principal insurgent groups in Afghanistan—the Quetta Shura Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) organization—share a common goal: the expulsion of American-led forces from Afghanistan. While they fight in Afghanistan, they are rooted in Pakistan, where the senior leadership for each organization is headquartered. McChrystal noted this in the strategy review he submitted to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in August 2009. "Afghanistan's insurgency is clearly supported from Pakistan. Senior leaders of the major Afghan insurgent groups are based in Pakistan."

As the name "Quetta Shura Taliban" indicates, this group has long been based in Quetta, Pakistan. It is widely known that Taliban chief Mullah Omar and his cohorts have met in Quetta for the better part of a decade. As McChrystal noted last year: "At the operational level, the Quetta Shura conducts a formal campaign review each winter, after which Mullah Omar announces his guidance and intent for the coming year."

Likewise, Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin Haqqani, the father and son who lead their own Taliban-affiliated network, are based in northern Pakistan. So is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the head of the HiG. All three organizations maintain training camps there and draw recruits from the Afghan refugees who live along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

The leaders of the three main Afghan insurgency organizations were all originally proxies of the ISI and maintain a relationship to this day. The degree of the ISI's current involvement with the Afghan insurgents is a topic of debate. Undoubtedly, parts of the ISI have assisted American efforts to disrupt the jihadist hydra's operations. Other ISI operatives have, however, continued the patron-client relationship. McChrystal recognized this in his review, which noted that the three groups are "reportedly aided by some elements of Pakistan's ISI."

There is ample evidence to support this proposition. During an appearance on *60 Minutes* in May, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that "somewhere in [the Pakistani] government are people who know where Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda is, where Mullah Omar and the leadership of the Afghan Taliban is, and we expect more cooperation to help us bring to justice, capture or kill, those who attacked us on 9/11." Although Secretary Clinton did not name names, she was almost certainly referring to elements of the ISI.

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Indeed, in late 2009 the *Washington Times* reported that the ISI moved Mullah Omar and members of the Taliban's Shura council from Quetta to Karachi. In Quetta, the senior Taliban leaders were more susceptible to American Predator strikes. In Karachi, which is dotted with radical madrassas that can be used as hideouts, they are safer.

A more dramatic example of the ISI's ongoing sponsorship occurred on July 7, 2008, when a suicide car bomb exploded at the gates of the Indian embassy in Kabul, killing 58 and wounding more than 140. The attack was carried out by the Haqqani network, but American intelligence officials quickly concluded that the ISI backed the operation. According to the *New York Times*, the "conclusion was based on intercepted communications between Pakistani intelligence officers and militants who carried out the attack . . . providing the clearest evidence to date that Pakistani intelligence officers are actively undermining American efforts to combat militants in the region." There are also persistent reports that the ISI continues to fund, train, and protect leaders and fighters from all three of the Afghan insurgency organizations.

Each also has long-established ties to al Qaeda. The men who lead the insurgents' campaign counted Osama bin Laden as a friend and ally long before the September 11 attacks. This is why they have shared their safe haven in northern Pakistan. McChrystal noted this in his review last year, explaining that the three groups are "linked with al Qaeda and other violent extremist groups." More important: "Al Qaeda and associated movements based in Pakistan channel foreign fighters, suicide bombers, and technical assistance into Afghanistan, and offer ideological motivation, training, and financial support."

The fight against the Pakistan-based Afghan insurgency groups is directly related to the fight against al Qaeda. They are all part of the same jihad. And defeating the jihadists requires a focus on Pakistan as well as on Afghanistan. ♦

Obama's Crusade Against Profits

Coming soon to a college near you.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

You can never be sure when or why one industry or another will draw the attention of the Mr. Fixits of our federal government. Just imagine: There you are, Mr. or Ms. Businessperson, walking along, making money, minding your own business, and then *wham*: They pop up out of nowhere, wheeling around like a gun turret and fixing their gaze on you and your company, insisting that they're going to make you fairer and more rational and fix problems you didn't know you had. It must be terrifying.

And for that reason, if only for that reason, the multibillion-dollar industry of for-profit colleges deserves our sympathy. Proprietary colleges, as they're also called, educate about 7 percent of America's college students, according to a study by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Most of these are "nontraditional"—single parents, high school drop-outs, part-time workers, adults past the usual college age. They learn a trade or prepare for careers in medicine, business, education, or information technology. Being needier than the average college student, they bring to their schools large sums in federally subsidized loans, which the for-profit schools are delighted to accept. Students at proprietaries consume nearly 20 percent of the federal government's education loans and grants.

To oversee the for-profits from a perch at the all-seeing Education Department, President Obama last year appointed Robert Shireman, an activist who had spent much of his career chastising for-profit schools. Like most activists, he himself was not-for-profit. This spring Shireman gave a speech to school administrators that signaled Washington's intense interest in the schools. He singled out for-profit companies by name, ticking them off one by one—from Kaplan to DeVry, Strayer to the University of Phoenix. With heavy sarcasm he "congratulated" them for the large number of students they had recently enrolled, despite "these difficult economic times," and expressed mock admiration for the size of their revenue streams.

Then he dropped the sarcasm and compared the schools to the financial companies that had run amok before the collapse of 2008, and reminded them, pointedly, of the severe regulations that might be imposed as a consequence.

"Nice business you got there," Shireman seemed to be saying, sniffing the carnation in his lapel. "I'd hate to see anything happen to it."

Meanwhile, PBS's investigative program *Frontline* made for-profit colleges the subject of a breathless report that was intended as an exposé. The Education Department announced an investigation into the private accrediting agencies that decide whether proprietaries are eligible to accept federal loans. A raft of new regulations was handed down, with another one—which proprietaries say will force the closing of several school programs—set to be issued this fall.

Democrats on Capitol Hill responded on cue. The House Committee on Education and Labor held

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a hearing at which the chairman, George Miller, disparaged the very notion of "education for profit." Proprietary schools, he'd discovered, have obligations to "shareholders, profit margins, the stock markets," and other things that are tainted by commerce and money-grubbing. A few days later, Miller joined with a pair of Senate pashas, Richard Durbin and Tom Harkin, in asking the General Accountability Office to commence a "review" of the entire industry. Harkin followed up last week with a committee hearing of his own, featuring a parade of witnesses who likened proprietary colleges to a criminal enterprise.

What brought all this on? Like an idiot, the proprietaries have been making too much money—and making it, moreover, at a moment that promises to be a hinge point in the history of American higher education. Last year President Obama set the goal of making the United States the world leader in the percentage of population with college degrees. He has put the muscle of the American taxpayer behind his vow. The amount provided in federally subsidized college loans and grants nearly doubled last year; similar increases in operational funding have flowed to community colleges. At the same time, the federal government did away with the private bank programs that traditionally handled college loans and transferred control to the Department of Education.

The government is inducing more adults than ever before to go to college, and to the horror of the Mr. Fixits, the students are grabbing their loans and enrolling in the wrong kind of schools. One fourth of all adult undergraduates are going to a proprietary institution. At present trends, that figure will rise to 42 percent by the end of the decade. Unless something is done.

Enrollment has surged despite the high tuitions that proprietaries charge. Average tuition at a for-profit is roughly twice that of public schools (state universities or community colleges), and roughly half that of private, nonprofit schools. The Mr. Fixits, being government guys, suspect a trick. Miller, Shireman, and the others see the surging enrollments (and surging profits) as the result of market manipulation, misleading advertising, and deceptive recruitment practices—one more instance of the confidence game that is free enterprise, the ongoing cycle of exploitation of the weak at the hands of the powerful.

An industry as vast as proprietary education will have its share of predators and sleazeballs, but you can find simpler explanations for the popularity of for-profits. They offer a flexibility and convenience that's unavailable at most nonprofits, whether state-run or private. They offer multiple locations with uniform fees and credit hours. Rolling admissions allow students to begin study whenever they're ready. For-profits offer a higher percentage of night and weekend classes and make greater use of online teaching. Schools like these are designed to appeal to a single-parent or an adult working full time.

The flexibility does not extend to the curriculum, however, which may, paradoxically, be another advantage proprietaries enjoy over their nonprofit peers. There's something refreshingly no-nonsense about the for-profits, especially to anyone familiar with the airy, free-floating curriculum found in nonprofit schools. The liberal arts are rarely indulged. Course work, with some exceptions, is directed toward the practical goal of learning how to do a job, as a medical technician, a nurse's aide, a paralegal, so as to fix oneself on the first or second rung of the ladder to a decent living. There aren't many "History of Ideas" majors at DeVry.

The nontraditional population also explains why for-profit students are more likely to default on their student loans. Receiving 20 percent of all federal loans, for-profits account for more than 40 percent of the defaults. Their students usually have many more of the risk factors—lower incomes, unconventional family and work arrangements, past involvement in drugs and drink—that lead to high default rates. The same students with the same profiles would default at roughly the same rates whether they were enrolled in nonprofits or for-profits.

Yet the Mr. Fixits cite the default rate as an excuse to tighten regulatory control and thereby, they say, save the taxpayer money. It is an irony of the Obama era that an industry could be faulted for educating the disadvantaged citizens who are supposed to be the primary object of the president's concern. But government subsidy follows a peculiar and pitiless logic, under which the hobbling of a private business can be cast as an act of fiscal responsibility, and private citizens, receiving a subsidy in hopes of bettering themselves, will be allowed to better themselves only under approved conditions.

We should quickly stipulate that for-profit colleges are hardly delicate flowers of free enterprise. They are creatures of government subsidies without which they would become unrecognizable. And they are happy to meet the government on its own terms.

Recently the industry's trade group, the Career College Association, hired the Podesta Group to defend their cause against the coming Democratic onslaught. The firm is run by Anthony Podesta, a longtime professional Democrat and the brother of John, who was President Clinton's chief of staff. This year CCA made sure to invite President Clinton to speak at its annual convention, for his customarily mind-boggling fee. The subject of his speech was "Embracing Our Common Humanity." He assured the attendees that they were okay by him.

According to Bloomberg News, the CCA also hired the lobbyist Paul Braithwaite, the former director of the Congressional Black Caucus. The University of Phoenix hurried to

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donate $1.25 million in college scholarships to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. After careful study, the caucus, through several of its members, expressed disapproval of the administration's campaign against for-profit education.

However the campaign turns out, we are unlikely to hear an answer to the most interesting question it has raised: Why single out the proprietaries for special attention?

Both kinds of colleges, for-profit and nonprofit alike, rely for their existence on government subsidies, and both use the easy money to insulate themselves from market pressure. Both enjoy the inflated administrative salaries and bloated management that such insulation makes possible. Both are certified by the same inbred and lackadaisical bodies of accreditation. Both resist submitting themselves to objective measures of performance and quality.

And both, at their worst, are a swindle, enticing innocents into programs to which they're poorly suited, for which they're badly prepared, and from which they depart with slim chances of gainful employment, dangling nearly worthless degrees in such subjects as culinary arts, photographic composition, and English. What is sometimes true of the University of Phoenix is often true of Amherst and Ohio State.

In fact, the only genuine difference between the two kinds of college is this: One kind earns a profit. And nowadays that's enough to make you suspect.

If the administration gets its way and the regulatory regime continues to tighten, the for-profit education industry won't cease to exist. More likely it will regress into a form of state capitalism, as a kind of public utility: utterly dependent on government subsidy, hence utterly submissive to government authority, which can set prices and profit margins. The health insurance industry, with the passage of health care reform, is halfway there already.

And the sphere of private activity continues to shrink. ♦

AP PHOTO / RICK BOWMER

Dudley Do-Right

Can a Republican win in Oregon?

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

Portland

Oregon Republicans would probably like to forget the last decade. Starting in 2000, when Al Gore squeaked past George W. Bush by less than half a percentage point, GOP fortunes have plunged in this soggy corner of the Northwest. In 2002, Democrat Ted Kulongoski took the governor's office in a close race. In 2004, John Kerry carried Oregon decisively. In 2006, Kulongoski was easily reelected, and the Democrats captured both houses of the state legislature. In 2008, Obama won the state in a landslide, and Democratic upstart Jeff Merkley unseated two-term Republican senator Gordon Smith. No Republican has won here statewide in eight years.

Chris Dudley

But the 2010 race for governor may finally give Oregon Republicans reason to cheer.

This is partly because of the personal appeal of the Republican candidate. In a fiercely contested primary, GOP voters nominated Chris Dudley, a charismatic, 6′11″ former NBA center. Despite his record as one of the worst free throw shooters of all time, Dudley is fondly remembered by Oregonians as "Dudley Do-Right" for his time on the Portland Trail Blazers, where he played from 1993 to 1997, and again briefly in 2001 to 2003. His integrity and good works in the community earned him the NBA's J. Walter Kennedy Citizenship Award in 1996, and *USA Today*'s Most Caring Athlete Award in 1997.

Ethan Epstein is a writer in Portland, Oregon.

Dudley, who was born in Connecticut and grew up in San Diego, says he fell in love with Oregon while playing here, and after his retirement from the NBA he elected to live near Portland. No mere jock, Dudley earned a degree from Yale before entering professional basketball, but he has scant political experience. He was initially approached by Republicans last summer about running for a U.S. House seat, but he preferred to stay in Oregon and run for governor instead. Given his opponent, Dudley's lack of political experience may prove to be an asset in November.

Democratic primary voters nominated John Kitzhaber, a consummate Oregon insider. A medical doctor and long-serving member of the state legislature, he served two terms as governor, from 1995 to 2003. He left the state mired in recession and fought with the legislature throughout his tenure. He is running, in effect, as "Governor Do-Over." Although he now gives himself a "B+" for his performance as governor, when he left office, Kitzhaber famously declared that Oregon was "ungovernable."

The choice presented by the two candidates is stark. Dudley, who has worked as a successful financial planner and philanthropist since 2003, is running on "jobs, jobs, jobs." He wants to provide tax relief to small businesses, modernize Oregon's land use regulations, and offer incentives (rather than direct subsidies) to promising growth industries. He has pledged to propose no tax increases and has vowed to end the automatic budget increases

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that keep Oregon's budget in the red.

Kitzhaber is running on a grab-bag of issues. He suggests seeking a federal waiver from the standards imposed by the No Child Left Behind Act. He stresses environmental "sustainability." He has floated the idea of giving up Oregon's status as one of only five states without a sales tax, though voters have rejected this resoundingly in multiple referendums, most recently in 1993 by a three-to-one margin. This is catnip to Dudley, who relishes pointing out that as a legislator and governor, Kitzhaber supported raising taxes on income, gasoline, and cigarettes.

Dudley stands to benefit from national political trends favoring the GOP. President Obama's approval rating here is below 50 percent, and heretofore safe Democratic seats, like that of congressman David Wu of Portland's western suburbs, look ripe for Republican takeover. But voters in Oregon have their own reasons for being particularly receptive to Republicans this year. More than a decade of Democratic governance has left the state's economy in shambles. Unemployment is stuck at 10.8 percent, well above the national average. Environmental regulations have decimated the logging industry. High corporate taxes have seen companies like Louisiana-Pacific, a major building materials manufacturer, leave the state in search of a more business-friendly climate. As a result, Oregon Democrats are running away from their record.

The formula for statewide Republican victory in Oregon is simple. Roughly 30 of the state's 36 counties are sparsely populated and usually vote Republican. Dudley should carry them easily. He'll also have to take a significant share of the vote in the state's populous liberal enclaves, like Lane County, home of Eugene, and Multnomah County, home of Portland. If Dudley can capture 35 or 40 percent of the vote in these areas, he should be the next governor. The most recent statewide poll has him leading Kitzhaber 47 percent to 40 percent.

Dudley Do-Right may be set to defy Oregon's image as just another Left Coast state. ♦

The Obama Formula

Impotence abroad, omnipotence at home.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

There is something strange going on in American politics. Call it the belated triumph of George McGovern's "Come home, America" campaign.

While the secretary of defense works on plans to reduce spending on the military, his boss concocts plan after plan to increase spending on social programs. Even overseas interventions deemed important to national security are grudging, time-limited affairs—we might drop in for a while, but we are soon homeward bound. The American government's power to influence foreign events is assumed to be extraordinarily limited. While increasingly threatening and intransigent enemies strut across the world stage in defiance of sanctions and pleadings of international institutions, America has cast its lot with those multilateral institutions, eschewing unilateralism even when vital overseas interests are involved, pursuing the approval of adversaries from the Arab Middle East to Russia, Asia, and Africa.

Fast forward to domestic policy. Here government power is considered almost without limit. Fossil fuels create environmental and security problems, so government will order the invention of alternatives. The health care system is flawed, but rather than repair it we will transform it into one run largely by government. If Americans cannot be wooed to support these transformations, they are to be ignored by an administration and Congress that is far to their left, deploying a variety of parliamentary tricks. No wooing of support from Americans, from whom approval for domestic interventions is seen as less necessary than is the approval of the "international community" for our foreign policy.

Indeed, when it comes to domestic policy, so strong is the administration's sense of rectitude that the approval of the international community, so sought after in overseas affairs, matters not. If attacking a leading British company helps make the case for preventing offshore drilling, attack it the president will. If the European nations decide that austerity is necessary to get their finances in order, lecture them on the need to continue their stimulus programs. If Germany's trade policies don't suit the administration, go after Angela Merkel in advance of a G20 meeting. Those, of course, are traditional allies.

An exception to the policy of disregarding the views of other nations on U.S. domestic policy can always be made for a less friendly nation. If China manipulates its currency, rather than publicly identifying that practice, as the law requires, postpone the mandated report, even though currency manipulation by the Chinese regime undercuts the president's goal of doubling exports in the next five years. China, after all, is a potential adversary, to be wooed, while Britain, its pension funds heavily dependent on dividends from BP, is to be lacerated, never mind that we rely on its troops to support our efforts in Afghanistan.

The contrast between our policy postures at home and abroad is also

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obvious when it comes to the personal relationships struck by the president in those two different contexts. Foreign leaders are treated with a deference bordering on subservience. Apologies for perceived past misbehavior are accompanied with bowing and a tolerance of insults. Never mind that Hugo Chávez has heaped scorn upon American presidents, past and present, from a podium at the United Nations. His offer of a handshake and a book of anti-American rants is eagerly accepted by the president, providing our enemies in Latin America with a photo-op they dared not hope for in their wildest dreams.

Contrast this attitude with the posture taken at home. The president feels that the reach of the government extends into the boardrooms of the world, and demands and gets the firing of the CEO of General Motors, before turning on BP and forcing that company to recall to Britain its CEO, a man with whom he refused to meet during the long months of the Gulf oil leak. Bankers are denounced, insurance companies named and shamed for adjusting premiums to cost levels inflated by his health care reform. Government, seen as powerless to project American power abroad, is seen as so powerful at home that it has no need to extend any courtesies to the leaders of its private sector, trade unions excepted. So powerful that it is in a position to transform huge swaths of the economy, to impose "reforms" far more radical than any contemplated by Franklin Roosevelt, scuppering democratic processes when necessary in favor of executive orders to get the job done, publicly humiliating the Supreme Court when it read the right of free speech to include speech by those Obama believes distort the political process by making their views known.

Transformation on this scale costs money. The theory of the administration is that deficits now are necessary to finance changes that it deems to be in the public interest. So, huge bills to finance the changes await payment by a later generation, either in the form of higher taxes or a debased currency. Costs are serially underestimated, the value of vaguely described benefits overstated. The fact is that no such determination of the value of massive expenditures is necessary when change is driven by a vision of an America transformed into one very different from the America that exists today. That is why the likes of Nancy Pelosi do not feel in any way embarrassed by telling us that we won't understand what is in the health care bill until after it is passed: This is an exercise in ideology, not in prudent investment now for benefits later. As such, it needs no detailed justification, especially since the wishes of those most affected by it are deemed largely irrelevant.

Government, seen as powerless to project American power abroad, is seen as so powerful at home that it has no need to extend any courtesies to the leaders of its private sector, trade unions excepted.

Underlying this disparity between foreign and domestic policies, between catering to foreign audiences while ignoring the wishes of American voters, is an ideology that is profoundly anticapitalist. As the *Economist*, an Obama supporter, puts it, Obama has "all too often given the impression that capitalism is something unpleasant he found on the sole of his sneaker." He does not believe that private entrepreneurs create wealth: Somehow, most likely by means illegal or at minimum immoral, using methods designed further to disadvantage the already disadvantaged, these private-sector players have got their hands on wealth, which it is the role of a powerful government to snatch for its own, superior purposes. The same government that is powerless to stem the flow of gasoline to the nuclear-weapons-building mullahs feels it can allocate a larger part of America's resources than any peacetime government has ever attempted to do. The same government that is so unwilling to affect events that it stands silent while its enemies abroad savage, assassinate, and hang dissidents, eagerly denounces businesses that behave in a way inconsistent with the wishes of the administration.

It is almost as if collective schizophrenia dominates policymakers. Impotence abroad, omnipotence at home; shrinkage of the reach of government abroad, expansion at home; frugality in foreign and military affairs, profligacy at home; appeals for public approval of foreign citizens, deafness to the desires of voters at home.

It is, of course, possible that all this is a considered goal, what Tony Blair once called "joined-up government"—policies that are indeed accurate reflections of the goal of this government, which sees its foreign and domestic policies as consistent one with the other, rational trade-offs that allow government to advance its reach at home *because* it is retreating abroad. Never mind that this is just when nations that do not like us, that see us as the enemy, are using their domestic resources to increase their power relative to ours—China its booming economy to fund control of resources and a military capable of projecting power around the world; Iran its oil wealth to gain the nuclear weapons that will allow it to replace us and our allies as powers to be reckoned with in the Middle East; Russia its vast natural resources to revive its military and regain control of what it calls its near-abroad; Venezuela its oil revenues to pay for replacing American influence with its Bolivarian revolution. They have indeed joined their economies to their foreign policy goals, while we view domestic and foreign policy as separate things, the one to be strengthened while weakening the other. They've got it right. ♦

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Rookies Preferred

It's not a good year for veteran politicians, even conservative ones. **BY KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON**

Before wealthy businessman Rick Scott took to the airwaves in the spring, Attorney General Bill McCollum appeared to be well on his way to the Florida governor's mansion.

"So how come things in government never change for the better?" asked the plainspoken Scott. "Maybe it's because we never change the kind of people we send to government. We need a conservative outsider to hold government accountable."

In time Scott's ads became very specific about his view of McCollum's 30-year political legacy:

> Forty-five percent of [Florida] homeowners owe more than their homes are worth. How'd it happen?
>
> Congress made the mess—loosened regulations, pushed banks to make risky loans.
>
> Congressman Bill McCollum? He voted yes.
>
> So the mortgage industry made McCollum a high-paid lobbyist.

This is no Barney Frank liberal that Scott is savaging. McCollum has spent a lifetime in and around America's conservative movement.

Endorsing McCollum last week, Dick Armey, former House GOP leader, declared his friend was "tea party" long before there were tea parties. The high point of McCollum's 20-year congressional career was his service at Henry Hyde's right-hand in the impeachment of Bill Clinton.

One of Washington's leading conservative figures, explaining his support for McCollum, says their relationship goes back to the '60s when McCollum was a conservative political activist at the University of Florida. Indeed, when McCollum appeared recently in Washington at a weekly luncheon of conservative leaders, he was given the warm greeting of an old friend returning home.

But back in Florida, McCollum is in trouble. And if his life as a career politician isn't enough of a problem, McCollum has managed to get himself into a real mess over the Arizona immigration law. Activists say the most effective of the Scott ads features McCollum's voice declaring, "We don't need that law in Florida. That's not going to happen here." Scott then declares the Arizona law nothing but "common sense."

The ads have had an effect. Three weeks ago a Quinnipiac University poll gave the businessman a 13-point lead over McCollum in the upcoming August 24 Republican primary. More recent polls show Scott with the lead, though by lesser margins. Both men hold comfortable leads over likely Democratic candidate Alex Sink, the state's elected chief financial officer.

During his visit to Washington, McCollum assured old friends that he supports the Arizona immigration law, though a top Scott strategist has given reporters an entertaining "McCollum immigration timeline" documenting McCollum's changing positions on the Arizona law and its relevance to Florida.

Immigration is not the only problem plaguing McCollum. The campaign's inability to exploit apparent problems with Scott's business record is striking. Between 1987 and 1997, Scott parlayed the purchase of two Texas hospitals into a network of 340 hospitals with 285,000 employees in 37 states generating more than $20 billion in annual revenue. In 1996 *Time* named Scott one of the 25 most influential people in America for showing how free market health care could significantly reduce waste and inefficiency.

But in 1997 what was then Columbia/Hospital Corporation of America became the target (along with a host of other hospital corporations) of a federal Medicare fraud probe. Scott urged his board to allocate legal resources to battle the charges. The board chose not to—and forced him out in a settlement that left him a very rich man. In 2003 the corporation settled the investigation by paying the government $1.7 billion, the largest such fine in history.

So how did the forces of McCollum choose to present Scott's business record to GOP voters? In mid-spring Florida airwaves were hit with a $1 million ad campaign urging viewers to stop the kind of Medicare fraud perpetrated by Rick Scott by calling a toll free number (which turned out to be a U.S. government hotline). The ads were paid for by a Virginia group called the Alliance for America's Future. Its president is Mary Cheney, daughter of the former vice president. Who financed that organization's ad buy? It's a 501(c)(4) nonprofit, not required to disclose its donors, so no one knows. To many in Florida, this unsolved mystery became a bigger story than the issue it sought to raise.

Meanwhile, Scott created a website, truthaboutrickscott.com, with a detailed defense of his record—and went on television with another highly effective ad. He asserted that he was so far removed from the fraud investigation that he was never interviewed, much less charged, by federal authorities, but he acknowledged that mistakes were made. Looking straight into the camera, he said he had learned from these mistakes.

"If you want a career politician, then go with McCollum. But if you want someone who learns, leads, and demands accountability . . ." After all this, Scott is still ahead in the polls.

Scott is an unlikely politician. He grew up in a small town outside Kansas City, Missouri. His father was a long-haul truck driver. His mother worked at a host of jobs to support the five children, and, as she told him

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growing up, "to help you all make something of yourselves."

From an early age he worked hard, helping his mother at tasks ranging from cleaning phone booths to short-order cook. It was from her in those tough years that he developed a commitment to entrepreneurship.

Scott spent 29 months as a radar technician in the U.S. Navy, married his high school sweetheart, and went on to the University of Missouri Kansas City (where he bought, revived, and sold two doughnut shops). He earned a law degree from Southern Methodist University, and joined a Dallas firm. It was there that he and a major client bought those first hospitals that served as the foundation for his business empire.

Scott cut his political teeth in the fight against Hillarycare in 1993. "Rationing is the ultimate destination of government-run health care," he says now, "and the people who need help most suffer the most." Last year, he mobilized against Obamacare. He organized Conservatives for Patients' Rights to battle Obama's health care plans. The band of political and advertising consultants he put together were among the most talented opponents of the Obama public option plan. Today those operatives have been transformed into the foundation of his campaign for governor.

McCollum says he has yet to spend much of the $7 million he has raised for his campaign, and while that may not come close to matching the money Scott can spend (and already has), McCollum will find it hard to do worse than his Alliance for America's Future allies did with their Medicare fraud ads. On the other hand, Scott at this point may only need to convince Republicans that he can defeat Sink to win the primary.

For establishment conservative politicians who had expected to ride the public disenchantment to victory this fall, the McCollum campaign may be illustrating the old Pogo comic-strip line popular when he was a young conservative activist at the University of Florida: "We have met the enemy, and he is us." ♦

The Consummate Warrior

Marcel Bigeard, 1916–2010.

BY MAX BOOT

In English-speaking countries, the French armed forces have become a joke. Literally. Entire websites are devoted to one-liners like: "How many gears do French tanks have? Six: five reverse and one forward." This is a gross slander of a nation that, back in the days of Louis XIV and Napoleon, was synonymous with military excellence. Those skills, that courage, that panache did not suddenly disappear in the 20th century, notwithstanding France's string of humiliating defeats. There is no better reminder of that than the career of General Marcel Bigeard, who died on June 18 at age 94.

Born in 1916 to a railway worker, he left school at 14 to work in a bank. Called up when war came in 1939, he was a lowly warrant officer when captured on the Maginot Line in 1940. The following year, after two failed attempts, he escaped from a German prison camp and made his way to French West Africa to join the Free French forces. In August 1944 (using the call sign Bruno, which became his lifelong moniker), he parachuted back into France to work with the Resistance and help the invading Allied armies. In the process, he earned the Legion of Honor and Britain's Distinguished Service Order.

Once World War II was over, the French army turned its attention to imperial wars, starting in Indochina where the Viet-Minh under Ho Chi Minh were trying to expel the colonial power. Captain Bigeard arrived in Saigon in 1945. By 1952, he was on his third tour, a major, and newly installed commander of the 6th Colonial Parachute Battalion ("Bataillon Bigeard"). By then everyone in Indochina, wrote French journalist Jules Roy, "knew his high forehead, his fair crew-cut hair, his bird-of-prey profile, his touchy independence"—and the extraordinary combat record that would one day earn him four-star rank without benefit of a St. Cyr education.

He was famous for his fitness and his austerity—both qualities which stood out in an army that valued its luxuries; French troops were issued a wine and cheese ration even in the field and were accompanied by mobile brothels. Bigeard's visitors, noted American diplomat Howard Simpson, could expect "a thin slice of ham and one small, isolated boiled potato" washed down with "steaming tea" rather than the multicourse banquets accompanied by wine and brandy that were de rigueur in most French messes. Bigeard, who had nothing but contempt for office-bound superiors, preferred to fight lean, "à la Viet."

The paras were the elite of the French army, a quick-reaction force that went wherever the fighting was the heaviest. In 1952, Bigeard and his men were dropped into the village of Tu-Lê in the northern highlands to stop a Viet-Minh offensive and allow the evacuation of French garrisons in the region. The battalion was soon encircled by an entire enemy division. Outnumbered ten to one, they fought their way out through dense jungle, walking nonstop for days and carrying the wounded. Entire companies were wiped out en route but

Max Boot is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is writing a history of guerrilla warfare and terrorism, on which this article is based, for W.W. Norton.*

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Bigeard and a small group of survivors managed to elude the enemy.

The peacocky personification of paratrooper panache, Bigeard entered battle without a personal weapon and always led from the front. "If it's possible, it's done," he said. And if it's impossible? That "will be done" too.

On November 20, 1953, he and his men (half of them Vietnamese) were part of the paratroop force dropped into a remote valley of northwestern Vietnam at a place called Dien Bien Phu. They chased off the local Viet-Minh troops and established a French stronghold. Three weeks later they left for other fights. They did not return until March 16, 1954, by which time the garrison had been cut off by the Viet-Minh, which had positioned artillery on the surrounding slopes. Bigeard and his men parachuted into this "jungle Verdun" and continued fighting until the end. They fought brilliantly and heroically but to little avail. The defenders were ground down by relentless artillery fire and frontal assaults that were driven home by the Viet-Minh with total disregard for losses.

The end came on May 7, 1954, when the French commander, Christian de Castries, decided to surrender. The Viet-Minh were only a few hundred yards from his command post, and he had lost nearly half his troops killed, wounded, or missing. Of Bigeard's 800 men, only 40 were still alive. More than 10,000 men were taken alive at Dien Bien Phu, many wounded; of that number fewer than 4,000 survived a death march and four months in Communist camps where undernourishment, lack of medical care, and brutal brainwashing were the norm. Bigeard, by now a lieutenant-colonel, was one of the most fit upon his release, thanks to his rigorous program of calisthenics. Far from broken, he was determined to do better "next time." He got his chance soon enough in Algeria, where another independence movement was getting under way.

Bigeard's role was immortalized in the 1966 movie *The Battle of Algiers*; he was one of the models for the dashing Colonel Mathieu who broke the National Liberation Front (FLN) campaign of terrorism in the colonial capital. (Bigeard was also the model for Colonel Raspeguy in Jean Larteguy's bestselling novels *The Centurions* [1963] and *The Praetorians* [1964].) By the time he arrived in Algiers, Bigeard had proven his combat worth yet again leading his 3rd Regiment of Colonial Parachutists in the mountainous *bled* (countryside). These were unmotivated reservists whom he quickly whipped into shape. Their effectiveness was heightened by their then-novel use of helicopters. During one of their battles, on June 16, 1956, Bigeard was shot just above the heart. Evacuation by helicopter and airplane saved his life. A few months later, on September 5, 1956, while jogging alone and unarmed in a seaside town in Algeria during his recuperation, Bigeard was shot twice more at point-blank range by three young Arabs. Again he just barely survived, but he was in fine fighting form by the time he led his paras into Algiers in their distinctive "leopard" camouflage uniforms and the high-peaked "lizard" forage caps designed by Bigeard himself.

Reviewing the troops in Madagascar, 1973

Bigeard and his regiment were given the most daunting task. They were assigned to the Casbah, the Arab quarter, where amid 100,000 inhabitants lurked the leaders of the FLN who were sending out their operatives—often pretty young women who could pass for Europeans—to place bombs in the cafes and gathering spots favored by the *pied-noirs*, the settlers. The paras confronted this threat in a brutal and effective manner. They cordoned off the Casbah with barbed wire. A curfew was imposed and orders given to fire on anyone caught outside. The bodies were left in the streets until the following morning to impress upon the inhabitants that they had met a force "even more extreme than the FLN."

Inside the Casbah the paras conducted a census and created a map showing who lived in which house. A preliminary list of targets was then drawn up using police files. In early January 1957, the strike teams fanned out into the Casbah, breaking down doors, and dragging suspects in for vicious questioning. A favorite interrogation technique was known as the *gégène*: electrical wires running from a small generator were clipped to a detainee's privates and the electrical current increased until he talked. Waterboarding was also commonplace. Once a suspect had been "broken," any compatriots he named were quickly rounded up and given the same treatment. Afterwards many of the detainees were summarily dispatched under such euphemisms as "killed while trying to escape" or "committed suicide." In all, during the Battle of Algiers, 24,000 Muslims were arrested and 4,000 disappeared.

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In recent years, the myth has become prevalent that torture doesn't work, that suspects simply tell their interrogators whatever they want to hear. In fact, while torture may be morally reprehensible, there is little doubt that, at least in Algeria, it was tactically effective. By forcing captured terrorists to identify their confederates, the paras were able to dismantle the FLN structure inside Algiers within a matter of months. By the fall of 1957 the last FLN leaders in the city had been either captured or killed.

Bigeard was by no means the worst offender in the use of torture. After his men arrested Larbi Ben M'hidi, a top FLN leader, Bigeard refused to torture him. Instead over the course of two weeks the two men developed a personal rapport, one warrior to another. Bigeard supposedly said to him: "Aren't you ashamed to place bombs in the baskets of your women?"

Ben M'hidi replied: "Give me your planes. I'll give you my baskets."

General Jacques Massu, the commander of 10th Parachute Division, finally got tired of this ongoing dialogue, and he sent a more ruthless officer, Major Paul Aussaresses, to do the foul deed. When Aussaresses took the FLN chief out of Bigeard's custody, he was amazed to see Bigeard's paratroopers presenting arms to send off the FLN leader with full military honors. "It was Bigeard in effect paying his respects to a man who had become his friend," Aussaresses wrote. Ben M'hidi was driven to an outlying farm where he was hanged "to make it look like suicide."

But, even if he was soft with Ben M'hidi, Bigeard was no innocent. Rumor had it that his troops flew suspects over the Mediterranean and dropped them out of airplanes to drown; the victims were called Shrimp Bigeard. Many years later Bigeard admitted that torture had been a "necessary evil."

Necessary or not, French brutality backfired by turning most people in Algeria, the world, and finally in France itself against the war effort. Under growing international pressure, President Charles de Gaulle granted Algeria independence in 1962. By then Bigeard was long gone. He had no part in the last-ditch effort to maintain *Algérie Française* that was mounted by French army veterans who formed the terrorist group known as the OAS (Secret Army Organization).

Bigeard moved on to commands in Africa where he almost died once again thanks to his favorite method of arriving to inspect a unit—he would parachute and land with his arm in a salute. "This nearly ended in disaster," wrote historian Alistair Horne of an incident which occurred in 1972, "when Bigeard, by now nearing sixty and a senior general, was dropped into a shark-infested sea by mistake during a visit to troops in Madagascar. He broke an arm but was saved by his faithful staff who had parachuted into the sea with him."

After retirement in 1974 he was deputy defense minister and elected to the French national assembly, but this dashing cavalier was unsuited for the grubby compromises of politics. His final years were marred by the controversy over the use of torture in Algeria—an issue that rose to prominence again in 2000-01 when Aussaresses published an unrepentant memoir. But, whatever moral qualms one might express about his conduct, Bigeard's legacy as an indomitable fighter remains intact. He was one of the great soldiers of the 20th century. Think of Bruno Bigeard the next time you hear a joke whose subtext is that French soldiers are cowards or incompetents. ♦

Endangered Species

Do pro-life Democrats have a future?

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Three months after his career-defining health care vote, Michigan Democratic representative Bart Stupak still bristles at questions surrounding the deal he cut with President Obama on abortion. "The executive order says public funds cannot be used for abortion," says Stupak, and those who say otherwise are "dishonest."

Stupak may not be dishonest, but he's certainly mistaken about the executive order that secured his vote, and the votes of other self-proclaimed pro-life Democrats, for Obamacare. Doesn't the executive order simply affirm the Senate bill's main abortion-funding provision that Ben Nelson signed off on—a provision that Stupak called "unacceptable" back in December? "I didn't like the Nelson language on December 24, and up through that time," Stupak replies. "Then there were changes in it, in the final bill. They cleaned it up quite a bit. There were changes made." In fact, the abortion language passed by the Senate on December 24 is identical to the language signed into law by President Obama on March 23.

"I didn't think we were going to get into the nitty gritty," Stupak says after I ask him about the section of the executive order that says subsidized plans may cover elective abortions so long as federal subsidies are "segregated" from private dollars—the main funding mechanism of abortion in the bill and something Stupak had long rejected as a meaningless bookkeeping scheme. "I'm happy to call back if you want to

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get into the nitty gritty," he says, "but in all honesty I don't have [the executive order] sitting here in front of me." Stupak said that on June 15. He never called back.

In Stupak's defense, he may not have been prepared to discuss the executive order because the topic of the interview was the future of pro-life Democrats. But it's hard to talk about the future of pro-life Democrats without discussing what happened in March. It was a defining moment that revealed there may not be a future for pro-life Democrats.

The health care vote confirmed that when a pro-life Democrat's principles collide with his loyalty to the broader Democratic agenda, it's the pro-life principles that give way. This pattern goes back all the way to *Roe* v. *Wade*. It happened long ago with the likes of Jesse Jackson and Richard Gephardt and Al Gore. Ultra-liberal Dennis Kucinich of Ohio—long a pro-lifer—tossed that position overboard the instant he launched his vanity presidential campaign in 2004. Harry Reid of Nevada sold out what remained of his pro-life principles in exchange for becoming the Senate Democratic leader in 2005. The Senate's health care vote in December claimed the credibility of the two remaining pro-life Democrats in that chamber: Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, who announced he'd rather pass a national health care bill that funds abortions than pass no bill at all, and Ben Nelson of Nebraska, who held out for a bit of extra federal cash for Nebraska known as the Cornhusker Kickback.

But Stupak was supposed to be different. He held out in spite of intense pressure from party leadership and activists for months. "I've had so many death threats, I don't know if most of them were for or against health care, before or after [the vote]," he says. As Stupak told The Weekly Standard two weeks before the health care vote in March: "If I didn't" cave in before, "why would I do it now after all the crap I've been through?"

Good question. We still don't fully know the answer. But the reason doesn't matter to pro-life groups. The lesson they took away from the health care vote is that there needs to be a day of reckoning for the Stupak Democrats, who cannot claim to be pro-life after voting for taxpayer-funding of abortion. So far, the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List has had some success targeting these members through its $1 million Votes Have Consequences campaign.

"Bart saved us a lot of money" by announcing his retirement, says the SBA List's Marjorie Dannenfelser. Another member of Stupak's group, Alan Mollohan of West Virginia, was defeated by an anti-Obamacare Democrat in the primary, after being softened up by SBA List ads that hammered him for betraying the pro-life cause. Other top targets for the SBA List include Steve Driehaus of Ohio, Joe Donnelly of Indiana, and Kathy Dahlkemper of Pennsylvania.

Dannenfelser, who once worked for Mollohan when he was the co-chairman of the pro-life caucus, doesn't delight in the campaign against the Stupak Democrats. The diminishment, if not extinction, of the pro-life Democratic caucus is bad for the pro-life movement, she says. "You want countervailing pressures" from both parties on the issue. Typically, pro-life laws that passed the House have had the support of anywhere from 190 to 210 Republicans, with pro-life Democrats providing the votes for a majority. Pro-life Democrats are never more important than when the Republicans are out of power, as they are now. The fact that the Stupak Democrats failed on an issue like taxpayer-funding of abortion—something so extreme that even most pro-choice Republicans oppose it, as well as about 70 percent of American voters—left pro-life groups with no other choice than to oppose them.

There are very few sincerely pro-life Democrats left in the House. One is Illinois congressman Dan Lipinski, who was the lone member of Stupak's group who voted for Obamacare in November (when it included Stupak's original anti-abortion language) but against it in March. He says he doesn't question Stupak's good faith but told Stupak before the vote that "the executive order probably would not stand [in court] and even if it did stand, it only covered part of the abortion funding—the direct funding of abortion [at Community Health Centers], not the fees for [subsidized] health plans."

Lipinski insists he isn't the last pro-life Democrat in Congress. "There are other pro-life Democrats, but they were never part of the Stupak group because they never considered voting for the health care bill." True enough. Most of those 15 to 20 pro-life Democrats were from Republican-leaning districts in the South. They never really had their principles pitted against their self-interest like Lipinski did, as a representative of a heavily Democratic suburban Chicago district.

"I think that for the pro-life movement, it would be very detrimental if this became only an issue of the Republican party," says Lipinski. But in the wake of the health care vote, that's the direction the movement is heading—especially if Republicans have the sense to campaign on passing an amendment banning any federal funding of abortion, as New Jersey Republican Chris Smith has proposed. Stupak won't even commit to calling for the passage of his original amendment. "I'd guess I have to see the context that it's being put in," he says. "I am not going to tell future Congresses what they should vote for."

"Prudence at this point would advise caution in endorsing self-described pro-life Democrats," says the SBA List's Dannenfelser. "It would be hard to say that others were tested and proven, but we obviously appreciate their vote," she says. "There are very few Lipinskis left in this world."

By crossing the Democratic leadership, Lipinski has run the risk of losing his seat through redistricting or the 2012 primary. Still, he says he has no regrets: "There's hardly a day that goes by that someone doesn't stop me out on the street in the grocery store . . . especially seniors . . . thanking me for my vote on the health care bill. Those are not all Republicans that are doing that." ♦

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A Winnable War

With a new commander and a renewed commitment from the commander in chief, we will make military progress in Afghanistan.

By Frederick W. Kagan & Kimberly Kagan

Success in Afghanistan is possible. The policy that President Obama announced in December and firmly reiterated last week is sound. So is the strategy that General Stanley McChrystal devised last summer and has been implementing this year. There have been setbacks and disappointments during this campaign, and adjustments will likely be necessary. These are inescapable in war. Success is not by any means inevitable. Enemies adapt and spoilers spoil. But both panic and despair are premature. The coalition has made significant military progress against the Taliban, and will make more progress as the last surge forces arrive in August. Although military progress is insufficient by itself to resolve the conflict, it is a vital precondition. As the *New York Times* editors recently noted, "Until the insurgents are genuinely bloodied, they will keep insisting on a full restoration of their repressive power." General David Petraeus knows how to bloody insurgents—and he also knows how to support and encourage political development and conflict resolution. He takes over the mission with the renewed support of the White House.

Neither the recent setbacks nor the manner of McChrystal's departure should be allowed to obscure the enormous progress he has made in setting conditions for successful campaigns over the next two years. The internal, structural changes he made have revolutionized the ability of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to conduct counterinsurgency operations. He oversaw the establishment of a three-star NATO training command that has accelerated both the expansion and the qualitative improvement of the Afghan National Security Forces in less than a year. He introduced a program of partnering ISAF units and headquarters with Afghan forces that had worked wonders in Iraq—and he improved on it. He oversaw the introduction of a three-star operational headquarters to develop and coordinate countrywide campaign plans. He has managed the massive planning and logistical burden of receiving the influx of surge forces and putting them immediately to use in a country with little infrastructure.

While undertaking these enormous tasks of internal reorganization, he has also taken the fight to the enemy. The controversies about his restrictions on the operations of Special Forces and rules of engagement that limit the use of destructive force in inhabited areas have obscured the fact that both Special Forces and conventional forces have been fighting harder than ever before and disrupting and seriously damaging enemy networks and strongholds. Targeted operations against Taliban networks have increased significantly during McChrystal's tenure, and the Taliban's ability to operate comfortably in Afghanistan has been greatly reduced. ISAF forces have killed, captured, or driven off numerous Taliban shadow governors and military commanders. They have pushed into areas the Taliban had controlled and eliminated safe-havens.

The story of Marjah is particularly illustrative. Before this year, Marjah was a Taliban sanctuary, command-and-control node, and staging area. Taliban fighters based there had been able to support operations against ISAF and coalition forces throughout Helmand Province. Lasting progress in Helmand was simply not possible without clearing Marjah. McChrystal cleared it. The Taliban naturally are trying to regain control of it. ISAF and the ANSF are trying to prevent them.

The attempt to import "governance" rapidly into the area is faltering, which is not surprising considering the haste with which the operation was conducted (driven at least partly by the perceived pressure of the president's July 2011 timeline). The attempt was also ill-conceived. Governance plans for Marjah emphasized extending the influence of the central government to an area that supported insurgents precisely because it saw the central government as threatening and predatory. Although ISAF persuaded President Hamid Karzai to remove the most notorious malign actor in the area from power, Karzai

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allowed him to remain in the background, stoking fears among the people that he would inevitably return. The incapacity of the Afghan government to deliver either justice or basic services to its people naturally led to disappointment as well, partly because ISAF's own rhetoric had raised expectations to unrealistic levels.

The biggest problem with the Marjah operation, however, is that it was justified and explained on the wrong basis. Marjah is not a vitally important area in principle, even in Helmand. It is important because of its role as a Taliban base camp. It was so thoroughly controlled by the insurgents that the prospects for the rapid reestablishment of governance were always dim. It was fundamentally a military objective rather than a political one, and McChrystal made a mistake by offering Marjah as a test case of ISAF's ability to improve Afghan governance. What matters about Marjah is that the enemy can no longer use it as a sanctuary and headquarters. ISAF's military success there has allowed the coalition to launch subsequent operations in the Upper Helmand River Valley, particularly the more strategically important contested area around Sangin. The Marjah operation has so far succeeded in what it should have been intended to do. The aspects that are faltering should not have been priorities in that location.

Kandahar differs from Marjah in almost all respects. Kandahar City is not now a Taliban stronghold, although the Taliban are present in some force in its western districts and can stage attacks throughout the city. The Taliban had controlled the vital neighboring district of Arghandab until newly arrived American forces began contesting it in September 2009. The insurgents remain very strong in Zhari, Panjwayi, and Maiwand Districts to the west and south of Kandahar City, but they do not control any of those areas as completely as they controlled Marjah.

An even greater difference is that Kandahar City and the surrounding districts are strategically important terrain. It is much too strong to say "as Kandahar goes, so goes Afghanistan"—the coalition could succeed in Kandahar and still lose the war. But it is very hard to imagine winning the war without winning in Kandahar. It is the most populous city in Afghanistan's Pashtun belt, the historical base of the Pashtun dynasties that formed and ruled Afghanistan for most of the last 250 years, and the birthplace of the Taliban itself, as well as the home of the Karzai family. It is also geographically important as the major city at the southwestern tip of the Hindu Kush and the junction of the roads from Herat, Kabul, and Quetta (in Pakistan). For all of these reasons, enduring stability in Kandahar underwritten by acceptable and effective governance is an essential precondition for success in Afghanistan in a way that stability in Marjah simply is not.

The Marjah operation nevertheless offers important lessons about how to approach Kandahar. McChrystal had already rightly abandoned the idea of parachuting government officials into cleared areas around Kandahar before his departure. He was focusing instead on trying to get the government officials already in place to build local support for the operation. That effort, manifested by several *jirgas* and *shuras* (gatherings of officials and elders) over the past few months, has been faltering. McChrystal had recognized the problem before his departure, which is one reason he had announced a delay in the planned clearing operations around Kandahar. Petraeus now has the opportunity to revisit this approach to building local support for the operation and correct it.

An Afghan Army sergeant addresses tribal elders in Helmand province, June 16.

It is too soon to say which of the various alternative approaches Petraeus will adopt or whether it will succeed. Learning, adapting, and trying different approaches are not the same as failing or losing. On the contrary, these are an essential part of success. American forces in Iraq experimented with a variety of approaches over years throughout the country before hitting on the right set of solutions. Under McChrystal's command, ISAF was moving through similar phases in Afghanistan much more rapidly. Since Petraeus has already shown his ability to explore alternatives until he finds one that works, there is reason to have some confidence that he will do so in Kandahar and in Afghanistan more generally.

Recent news reports have exposed what those who know Kandahar have long understood—that the pre-

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dominance of Ahmad Wali Karzai, the president's half-brother, alienates a significant portion of the population and is itself a major driver of instability and insurgency. Excellent reporting by Dexter Filkins of the *New York Times* and others has revealed the degree to which U.S. and ISAF contracting practices have reinforced this predominance and thus contributed to the problem. Does Ahmad Wali's kinship with the president make this problem intractable—thus rendering the entire effort hopeless? Here the example of Iraq may be illuminating.

Between 2003 and 2005 it appeared that the largest problem in Iraq was the Sunni insurgency and the al Qaeda organization with which it interacted symbiotically. In 2006 it became apparent that the problem was larger than that. Shiite militias had been systematically cleansing Baghdad and other mixed areas of their Sunni populations, fueling the insurgency and deepening the hold of al Qaeda, which seemed to offer the Sunni communities under assault their most reliable protection. Individuals within the Iraqi government actively supported the Shiite militias. The deputy health minister allowed them to use ambulances to drive death squads around Baghdad. The Iraqi National Police were badly infiltrated and committed horrendous atrocities at the orders of officials within the government. The minister of finance had brought into the National Police the infamous Wolf Brigade of the Badr Corps that set the standard for sectarian brutality. Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki tolerated this behavior and protected some of those who were engaged in it.

Maliki is still prime minister (for now). The sectarian deputy health minister (who escaped trial by intimidating the judges) has been elected to the new parliament. The Badr Corps finance minister remained in position, as did many others engaged in sectarian activities that were fuelling the insurgencies. But the Shiite death squads have stopped cleansing. The National Police are now welcomed in Sunni districts they once terrorized. Maliki himself led military operations against the strongholds of the most dangerous Shiite militias, in Basra and Sadr City, in 2008. Some of the worst offenders were removed from power, but many were not. What is both remarkable and promising is that even those who remained were persuaded to stop engaging in the activities that were driving Iraq toward unlimited sectarian civil war by the end of 2006. The cessation of malign behaviors can be as important as the removal of malign actors, in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq.

Iraqi sectarian actors did not suddenly see the light and embrace diversity. They changed their behavior in response to a wide array of pressures brought on them and their patrons by the entire American team, from General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker down to soldiers in the streets. Petraeus and Crocker in particular adopted a highly nuanced approach to the problem. When they had strong information (not necessarily legal evidence) that particular leaders were behaving badly, they confronted the prime minister with that information as a policy matter rather than a legal one. Lower level commanders did the same thing with their counterparts within the Iraqi Security Forces. In some cases, American units simply partnered with misbehaving Iraqi units so closely that the Iraqis could not engage in malign behavior.

As these efforts were going on, Petraeus and Crocker inserted American forces into contested neighborhoods and effectively took control of the ground. Their presence changed the equation—local people reported on the misbehavior of Iraqi officials; American forces took notice and, when appropriate, took action. By simultaneously taking the fight into the safe-havens and strongholds of the Sunni insurgents and Al Qaeda in Iraq, U.S. forces reduced the capability of those terrorists and began to bring down the violence. As the overall level fell, Shiite militia violence, which had been to some extent concealed by the spectacular attacks of al Qaeda, became more prominent, reinforcing the pressure on malign Shiite actors to take a knee. The fact that American forces then remained in the neighborhoods for a couple of years permitted the emergence of a political process based on new calculations and facilitated the restoration of the most basic confidence among Sunnis that the government was not committed to their annihilation.

The problem in Afghanistan is similar. Powerbrokers are not engaged so much in tribal cleansing or death squads, but they do use their own private security companies to enforce order, sometimes at the expense of marginalized groups who fuel the insurgency. Ahmad Wali Karzai is the most prominent example of such a powerbroker, but he is far from unique. A sound ISAF strategy would attempt to remove malign actors where necessary and possible, but also work to shape them and the environment in which they operate in ways that persuade or prevent them from engaging in the malign behavior that is fueling the insurgency and preventing stable governance from taking hold. Improving the way ISAF contracts with local companies—a process that has already begun—is part of the solution, but only part. ISAF will have to refocus its efforts at every level away from a binary choice between removing and empowering the malign actors, and toward the kind of nuanced approach that was successful in Iraq, appropriately modified.

There are never any guarantees in war. But the fact that efforts now will be led by General David Petraeus, with his record of judgment and creativity, is grounds for confidence that we can succeed. ♦

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Empty beach chairs rest on the sand as oil washes ashore in Orange Beach, Alabama.

BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Oil Messed Up

Anger grows along the Gulf Coast at the Obama administration's pathetic response to the largest oil spill in U.S. history.

By Winston Groom

Point Clear, Alabama

The most breathtaking irony in the whole sorry oil spill saga is that the Obama administration has selected BP—which it continues to demonize as reckless, greedy, and incompetent—as the principal entity to contain and clean up this vast and dangerous mess.

The millions affected by the ongoing fiasco watch in dismay and outrage as they weigh the possibility that their way of life may be changed for a long time, if not forever. I am among them. Fishing and boating waters are closed. Swimming warning flags are flying. Orange containment booms line the shores, and the news is filled with pictures of dying birds. I have not seen the oil yet, but I have smelled it from a dozen miles away. It is not a pleasant smell. If it gets into the deltas and the marshes and streams that are nurseries for the marine life here on the coast, it could become a great tragedy. Which is all the more reason for anger and frustration at the monumental incompetence of the attempt to contain this greatest of oil spills in U.S. history.

It has been apparent from the outset that the Obama administration had no wish to be responsible for fixing this problem without having some sort of "plausible deniability." They saw what happened to George W. Bush with New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina and wanted no part of that kind of trap. Instead, the White House embarked on a program of finger-pointing, bad-mouthing, scolding, and threats. Reckless, greedy, and incompetent as BP may be, this only made the company's task considerably harder to perform—especially with the government's much publicized "boot on their throat."

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Nobody along the Gulf Coast has a crystal ball or divining rod to read what's in the administration's mind, but anyone with a brain can see that a massive effort will be necessary to avert an ecological and economic catastrophe. Between double and ten times the presently available personnel and equipment is needed, and they are needed now.

People here have become cynical. There have been suggestions that Obama wants to use the oil spill as a "teachable moment" in his effort to pass his cap and trade energy legislation. And there are even darker intimations, the suspicion that something else must be afoot. If the spill had occurred in Long Island Sound, say, or San Francisco Bay—or in Nantucket Sound with oil lapping at the beaches of Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard—would there be this indolent a response from Washington?

So far, the effort to contain the spill has been pathetic. Oil washes up, and after a while a truck arrives with a cleaning crew hired from distant states, who mop-up or shovel it into plastic bags that may or may not get picked up later. They then return to sit under a tent until the next call comes or, as has happened in a few cases, a sheriff arrives to arrest them on outstanding warrants. Meantime, fleets of college kids using daddy's fishing boat are being paid up to $2,000 a day to tool around looking for oil.

Each morning seems to bring a new fool's errand. On June 18, for example, the U.S. Coast Guard apprehended a dozen oil-skimming barges in the midst of performing their duty, and shut down their operations for the rest of the day in order to determine if they were carrying the proper number of life preservers and fire extinguishers. If the Coast Guard was so worried about safety, why not simply take a big pile of life preservers and fire extinguishers out to these craft and hand them around, so that the skimmers could keep at their essential job?

But that is not the way government operates. At least not this government, which has created a perfect storm of bureaucratic and regulatory gridlock around the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Whatever is done to prevent the oil from coming ashore must be approved by the EPA, OSHA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard, and a host of lesser bureaucracies.

Just a few days ago, a large slick of oil several hundred acres in size was allowed to enter Mobile Bay and hover in the lee of Gaillard Island, one of the largest Brown Pelican rookeries in the United States. According to a spokesman for BP, "None of the 135 boats working out of Dog River, or the 54 boats working out of Fairhope, had the training to handle the oil." It seems oil skimming or booming requires taking courses and passing tests given by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Otherwise you run the risk of being arrested.

Same goes for trying to save oiled birds or other wildlife. Federal permits—which can take up to three years to process—are required, and violators are subject to arrest, fines, and jail. So if an oiled mallard washes up on shore, best leave him be and call the proper authorities to scrub him down with Dawn soap, never mind if he dies before they get there.

Some brave souls are resisting this nonsense. A couple of fire chiefs from the Magnolia River and Fish River communities in Alabama got tangled up in five weeks' worth of red tape just to bring in equipment to block the oil from getting into their rivers. "They can arrest me and Jamie if they want to," one of them said, "This is the biggest damn mess I've ever seen."

Fixing the oil leak at the bottom of the gulf is, understandably, not something the U.S. government could be expected to do very well. So the Obama administration put the Coast Guard in charge of overseeing BP's efforts, as well as the containment and cleanup operations. But the president has been careful to distance his administration from the operation and any blame attached to failure, while never losing an opportunity to remind the public that it is all BP's fault and that they must be responsible for fixing it, cleaning it up, and paying for the mess.

The world has watched the excruciating process unfold and learned strange new expressions such as "Top Hat," "Junk Shot," and "Top Kill." Nothing worked until finally some sort of contraption was lowered over the leaking well, which now captures much of the oil. But why did this all drag out so long, with weeks passing in between BP's various attempts to stem the flow? Apparently BP would wait until one effort failed before starting another, instead of having everything in place for a new attempt as soon as they gave up on the last. What were our leaders thinking?

All the while, a gargantuan mass of oil has been accumulating in the Gulf of Mexico—not as a monolithic slick, but in many forms. It comes sometimes as thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of foamy fingers of "orange mousse" or as a sheen or as tarballs or in thick brown globs or pods of oily slab hundreds of acres (or even miles) wide. Day and night it drifts out there, twisting and turning amorphously with the wind, tides, and currents, and washing ashore from Louisiana to Florida—soiling, stinking, killing. And what were the responsible parties doing all this time—those institutions that are supposed to be protecting citizens from this kind of nightmare? From all appearances, they were doing *squat*!

Two months after the well blowout and the start of the great leak, plans for keeping the oil offshore remain hopelessly inadequate. The so-called "response" could comprise

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wonderful material for a new series of Keystone Kops movie shorts. Consider this recent newspaper account of BP's chief operating officer Doug Suttles touring oil-fouled beaches:

> Suttles later flew over heavy [oil] sheens on Perdido Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. He expressed frustration that there was no way for pilots [of spotter planes] to communicate with skimmer boat captains working on the Gulf surface and direct them to areas thick with emulsified oil. "We've got to address that. We need to get the skimmers to the oil," Suttles said.

Say *what*? These people have known for two months there was a giant oil slick forming out there, bound to come onshore, and haven't figured out how to connect the scout planes with the skimmer boats? Haven't they ever heard of RadioShack?

Aside from the so-called "dispersants" that BP has been spraying to dissipate the oil, the two main tools for keeping the stuff off the shores are boom and skimmers. (The dispersants themselves were an occasion for a hissy-fit between BP and the EPA, which first approved them, then in response to complaints by scientists, rescinded the approval, then gave BP a deadline to quit using the dispersants, then changed its mind again and huffily reapproved them.)

Boom comes in various forms—large ocean boom, smaller containment boom, absorbent boom—but not nearly enough of it has been available on the Gulf Coast. Alabama governor Bob Riley was infuriated when, after his office secured a dozen miles of hard-to-come-by ocean boom to protect Mobile Bay, he was summarily informed that the Coast Guard had confiscated it for use in Louisiana.

But the most egregious scandal of all is the lack of skimmer boats to remove the oil from the water before it hits land. A few weeks ago, at the height of tourist season, as oil began washing up on beaches in Alabama, the Coast Guard announced that the best way to deal with the problem was to let the oil wash ashore and then clean up the beaches once the tide went out. That tactic proved sadly wrong. A story in the June 20 *Mobile Press Register* was accompanied by photographs of the vast layers of oily goo that had collected on the bottom in the shallows many yards out from the beaches, killing everything it settled on, and ruining swimming and wading for everyone. Apparently the Coast Guard claimed it was easier to clean up the beaches than to fight the oil before it landed because it lacked enough skimmers.

Right after the disaster struck, 13 oil producing nations around the world, plus the U.N., offered the services of their dredges and large skimming ships, capable of removing hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil. They were turned down by the Obama administration because of the Jones Act, a piece of labor union-inspired legislation that forbids foreign vessels or foreign crews from working in U.S. waters. Republican legislators have called for President Obama to waive the act as President Bush did during the Katrina disaster, but so far he has declined.

The lack of skimmer vessels becomes more critical each day. All the boom in the world cannot contain an oil spill without something to quickly skim it up. Waves, wind, and current soon push the oil over or under the boom. When that large slick was allowed to enter Mobile Bay, promises were made by BP and the Coast Guard that the mouth and other entrances would be protected by skimmers. Part of the slick went 25 miles north to the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, one of the largest wetlands systems in the nation. There were no skimmers available to deal with it.

According to the Coast Guard there are 400 skimmer vessels working along the affected coast—which, depending on how its measured, is somewhere between 500 miles (the linear measure) and 5,000 (if you measure every cove and creek). There are said to be 2,000 skimmers available in the United States. Gulf Coast residents are wondering just what the other 1,600 are doing. Apparently many of them are required by government regulation to remain right where they are in case of emergency. The mayors of a number of small towns along the coast are seeking to purchase their own skimmers instead of relying on the effort by BP and the government, but that leaves open the danger of government regulators insisting on weeks of training and testing before they can be put to use. When the oil is upon you, it is not a matter of weeks, but of hours, even minutes. The cleanup effort is drowning in the proverbial sea of red tape. The interesting contradiction here is that the entire response is turning into one of the greatest arguments against government regulation that could possibly be imagined.

If BP's relief well is successful and the leak is plugged, and if an armada of skimmers is built up to work round the clock and manages to keep the shores mostly clean then, barring a hurricane, the oil out in the gulf will probably degrade and/or evaporate naturally and the emergency will have passed. But make no mistake, these are big ifs.

Late on Father's Day, I walked out to Julep Point, a peninsula jutting into Mobile Bay from which, on a clear day, you can see Dauphin Island, a dozen miles south, and the gap at the mouth of the bay where Admiral Farragut cried, "Damn the torpedoes." Beyond that, out in the great gulf itself, a bank of dark rain clouds was tinged pinkish-gold, backlit by the setting sun. Out there, too, was the oil, upwards of 80,000 square miles of it, rocking silently on the waves. I grew up here on the coast and had the bay and the gulf beaches and the miles of river delta to enjoy. I wonder if that will be true for my 11-year-old daughter. There are many others here like me who gaze into a lowering future, and do not like what they see. ♦

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The Jewish Encyclopedia

In the postwar era, no magazine has matched the breadth of 'Commentary.'

By Joseph Epstein

Much of my education, such as it is, is owing to intellectual journalism. I first discovered the intellectual journals—*Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Dissent*, *Encounter*, and others—in my wanderings in the periodical room of William Rainey Harper Library in my junior year at the University of Chicago. These magazines functioned for me as a continuation of the Great Books education served up, with vastly uneven allure, in the school's dour classrooms.

They also allowed me to link the past with the contemporary. Among their contributors were Dwight Macdonald who in his comic devastations of middlebrow culture—he wrote strong takedowns of the Great Books of the Western World, the New English Bible, and Webster's Third New International Dictionary—seemed a successor to H.L. Mencken; Edmund Wilson who in his biographical and encyclopedic interest in literature seemed a successor to Sainte-Beuve; and Sidney Hook who in his logic and rationality, a successor to the thinkers of the Enlightenment. ("Voltaire with a mustache," is what my friend Edward Shils once called Sidney.) Reading these and other contributors to the intellectual journals provided its own little lesson in how intellectual influence and tradition work.

As it happened, I came upon the intellectual magazines in 1957, one of the high points in their history. Among their contributors, along with those I've already mentioned, were Lionel Trilling, Allen Tate, Clement Greenberg, John Crowe Ransom, Saul Bellow, Hannah Arendt, Randall Jarrell, Leslie Fiedler, Ralph Ellison, Mary McCarthy, Delmore Schwartz, James Baldwin, Robert Lowell, Alfred Kazin, and Irving Howe; contributors from abroad included André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, Ignazio Silone, Bertrand Russell, George Lichtheim, Nicola Chiaromonte, Arthur Koestler, Raymond Aron, F.R. Leavis, and Gershom Scholem. The outlook of the intellectual journals of that time was international, the reigning feeling fraternal: The contributors were a fraternity, if a highly disputatious one, of intellectuals.

None of these magazines had a large circulation. Fees paid to contributors were almost derisory, sometimes not reaching the high two figures, often sent out in handwritten checks. All the editors could promise contributors was a serious audience and the opportunity to have their work appear in excellent company. Good writers did not have all that many other places to go, at least if they were serious intellectuals not willing to lower their sights. By this time the war of the brows was underway in earnest, with the intellectual journals being strictly highbrow, or high culture, and the notion of "selling out" was very much in play. Selling out, among the intellectuals who wrote for these magazines, included appearing in the *New Yorker*, about which Robert Warshow, an editor at *Commentary*, wrote a devastating piece whose main point was that the *New Yorker* wasn't about understanding the subjects it took up but about inculcating the proper attitude to take on those subjects.

Of all the intellectual magazines, *Commentary* was the one of most importance to me. Discovering it was a great intellectual event in my life. Alongside publishing many of the leading intellectual figures of the day, *Commentary* offered a serious and critical perspective on Judaism and Jewish life in America unavailable anywhere else. The magazine ran contributions from such Jewish theologians as Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Emil Fackenheim and historians such as Salo Baron and Lucy Dawidowicz. Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, and Philip Roth—the Hart Schaffner & Marx of American literature, as Bellow bitterly jibed—published some of their early stories in its pages; so, too, did such old world Jewish writers as Isaac Bashevis Singer and Chaim Grade.

Joseph Epstein, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is the author, most recently, of* The Love Song of A. Jerome Minkoff And Other Stories.

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One of the magazine's regular features was called "From the American Scene," which included accounts of American Jewish institutions, stories of the assimilation of immigrants, and odd and interesting aspects of the lives of Jews throughout the country. One such piece I recall, written by a woman named Grace Goldin, was about her father, an immigrant and a grocer in Tulsa who loaned money to an oil wildcatter. When the latter's well came in, the grocer, whose loan made him part-owner of the well, found himself a wealthy man. With his newfound fortune, he built a house, one wing of which he used as a private synagogue behind which he planted a large rose garden, because on Saturdays, the Jewish sabbath, he wished, he said, "to see nothing but Jews and roses."

I have been reading *Commentary* since 1957, and writing for it, as Benjamin Balint, in *Running Commentary* (PublicAffairs, 304 pp., $26.95), a critical history of the magazine, informs me, since 1964. I was also interviewed by Balint, and my name is mentioned in his book several times. Balint himself was a sub-editor at *Commentary* between 2001 and 2004. *Running Commentary*, though, is far from an in-house history where life has been, as Grace Goldin's father wished it, all Jews and roses.

Norman Podhoretz, 1959

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Balint has gone through *Commentary*'s archives with great care, and I shouldn't be surprised to learn that he has read his way through the entire 65-year run of the magazine. His book contains a vast amount of useful information, some of the best of it about the magazine's founding and its early days. But it suffers from the want of a clear point of view. In the end, one is not altogether sure where Benjamin Balint stands in regard to *Commentary*, itself one of the most continuously contentious magazines ever produced in America.

Running Commentary begins with the career of the magazine's first editor, Elliot Cohen, who set the parameters and tone of the magazine. The editorial masthead of the early *Commentary*, which was founded in 1945, just after the war, included, along with Robert Warshow, a brilliant writer on popular culture, the writer Irving Kristol, the sociologist Nathan Glazer, and the art critic Clement Greenberg. A smart and witty woman named Sherry Abel was the managing editor, and a 23-year-old woman named Midge Decter worked as Elliot Cohen's secretary. I should like to add that the janitor was Alexis de Tocqueville, but fear no one would believe me.

Elliot Cohen had been born in Mobile, Alabama, in 1899, and graduated, precociously, from Yale in 1917. He soon was hired as managing editor of a magazine called the *Menorah Journal*, to whose pages he brought luminaries of the day from the world of Jewish thought and belles-lettres. One of his contributors, whom he subsequently hired as an assistant editor, was Lionel Trilling. Six years younger than Cohen, Trilling would later say that Elliot Cohen, who he claimed was "the only great teacher I have ever had," was "a man of genius."

Cohen left the *Menorah Journal* in 1931 because he thought it insufficiently critical in spirit, especially about the complex situation of Jews in America. *Commentary*, his new magazine, was published under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee, which picked up the bill for its perennial losses. The AJC is an organization that was formed at the turn of the 20th century by a small group of wealthy American Jews of German descent to protect the rights of Jews round the world. In Elliot Cohen they found the right man, but also someone who, with his insistence on complete editorial freedom, would sometimes give the organization conniption fits.

One of the chief differences between *Commentary* and *Partisan Review*, though they shared many of the same contributors, is that the former had a direct stake in Jewish issues, questions, problems. "*Commentary* would be," as Balint correctly puts it, "less avant-garde than *Partisan Review*: less enamored of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein; less European in orientation." Yet the preponderance of contributors to both magazines were Jewish intellectuals born and living in New York, causing Edmund Wilson to call *Partisan Review* the *Partisansky Review*.

In his new magazine, Cohen published some of the sharpest things written about the then-recent near genocide of the Jews in Europe. This was at a time when people didn't want to believe in the scale, which is to say the true horror, of the Holocaust. Balint notes that two excerpts from the diary of Anne Frank were published in *Commentary*, acquired from Doubleday for the piddling sum of $250 because, at the time, not all that many people were interested in it. One of the first copies of *Commentary* I happened to pick up had a gripping portion of *The Notes of Emanuel*

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Ringelblum about the last days of the Warsaw Ghetto.

As with so many intellectuals in New York in the thirties, Cohen was a leftist; for a period, according to Balint, he was a fellow-traveler. But by the time he founded *Commentary*, at age 46, he was strongly anti-Communist and a liberal. Elliot Cohen's anticommunism was of the take-no-prisoners kind. In the pages of *Commentary*, the execution of the Rosenbergs for treason was unequivocally approved. Balint reports that Cohen turned down a brilliant piece by Robert Warshow on Charlie Chaplin because he didn't want any fellow-travelers praised in his magazine.

Cyril Connolly—himself editor of *Horizon*, a splendid English intellectual journal that ran from 1939 to 1949—distinguished between dynamic and didactic magazines. Dynamic magazines published the best material they could find with no further motive than providing superior literary entertainment; didactic magazines published with a larger program or plan in mind. They had, as we should say today, "a line," which didn't of course preclude providing superior intellectual entertainment, without which the program or plan would of course never have had a chance to succeed. Connolly's *Horizon* was dynamic, and Cohen's *Commentary*, as would be true of the magazine under his successors, was didactic.

The advantage of heavy editing carefully done is that no 'Commentary' articles fell below a certain standard; the disadvantage was that much of the magazine read as if written by one person.

Elliot Cohen was very much what we should today call a "hands-on" editor. He instructed his contributors about what their articles should contain and how they should be organized and with what emphasis—and then, when the articles arrived, often rewrote them. The tradition of heavy editing continued well after Cohen's editorship. The advantage of heavy editing carefully done is that no *Commentary* articles fell below a certain standard; the disadvantage was that much of the magazine read as if written by one person.

Balint, who admires Elliot Cohen's achievement, characterizes the articles and reviews in *Commentary* "under Cohen's steady hand" in the following admirable formulation:

> *Commentary* treated politics with a literary sensibility. It balanced treatments of Jewish and general subjects, journalistic topicality with large-bore analysis. Neither pretentious nor patronizing, it joined the rigorous with the personal, passion with intelligence, brainy heft with fluency. It clamored to go beyond the immediate subject to larger questions of culture. It brought religious intensity to secular expression. It was writing con brio.

In 1959, at the age of 60, Elliot Cohen, who was a manic-depressive, took his life by tying a plastic dry-cleaning bag around his head. The American Jewish Committee briefly considered Alfred Kazin, Daniel Bell, and Leslie Fiedler for the editorship of *Commentary*, then offered it to Irving Kristol, who turned it down. The job was then offered to Norman Podhoretz, who, disregarding his friend Kristol's advice also to turn it down, accepted the job. The precocious Podhoretz, who was 29 at the time, had been a contributor to the magazine under Elliot Cohen, and worked there as an assistant editor under difficult conditions during the interregnum between Cohen's illness and death and his own appointment. No one expected him to be a dull editor; but then, no one could have predicted, either, on what a wild ride he would take the magazine.

Anyone interested in intellectual life in America over the past half-century cannot be neutral about Norman Podhoretz. I am certainly not myself; I admire him greatly, for his intellectual courage, his logic and clarity, and—a quality less known to his readers than to his friends—his kindness and generosity, of which I have had ample evidence in my dealings with him as both editor and friend. Yet most of Norman Podhoretz's life has been spent in intellectual combat. He is the last man to run away from a fight, which has earned him many enemies.

When younger, Podhoretz was a magnet attracting envy. When I lived in New York in the early 1960s, the contemporaries of Norman Podhoretz whom I knew were all envious of him. Not only had he made that longest of trips, as he once described it, from Brooklyn to Manhattan, traveling from the working class (his father was a milkman) to the educated—let us make that the *bien pensant*—class; but he seemed, at least from the middle distance, to have done it so easily. As an undergraduate at Columbia he became known as Lionel Trilling's favorite student. Off to Cambridge on a Kellett Fellowship he studied under F.R. Leavis and published at any early age in Leavis's magazine *Scrutiny*. After he returned to the United States, his literary criticism appeared in *Partisan Review* and in all the other okay places. He was a younger member, but one in good standing, of the group of New York intellectuals he himself has called "the Family," a term suggesting the coziness yet argumentativeness of an actual family, and the potential for internecine viciousness of a Mafia family.

Once he had attained the editorship of *Commentary*, Podhoretz gave it a violent lurch, ending the magazine's celebration of America under Elliot Cohen and steering it, as Balint puts it, "sharply leftward into a decade of antiestablishment iconoclasm." He began by publishing three lengthy excerpts from *Growing Up Absurd*, a book by Paul Goodman arguing, essentially, that America was not

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a country worthy of young men to grow up in. Staughton Lynd, a kind of domestic Noam Chomsky, found welcome in the new *Commentary*; and so did H. Stuart Hughes, a Harvard historian who argued for America's taking up a position of unilateral disarmament. Norman Mailer, then a close friend of Podhoretz's, wrote, quite incomprehensibly as I recall, on Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* as if he were a secular version of a Hasidic rebbe, which he clearly was not.

These leftist years at *Commentary*, from 1960 through roughly 1968, may have been the only phase in the career of Norman Podhoretz, who has been a lifelong nonconformist, when he traveled with the horde, or herd, of independent minds. Leftism was at that time nothing if not fashionable, and the only question among intellectuals on the left was how to out-radical one's fellow intellectuals. A proof of the fashionableness of leftism is that at no time was *Commentary*'s circulation higher (rising to 62,000, according to Balint) than during its most leftist period.

While still in his leftwing mode, Norman Podhoretz published his memoir, *Making It* (1967). The book argued the case for ambition, for exposing "the dirty little secret" that having power, money, and fame was much to be preferred over not having them. These are things that, however obvious, are not supposed to be averred publicly, especially by liberal-left intellectuals. Nor was Podhoretz permitted to get away with averring them. I don't recall a book having been so thoroughly lambasted by reviewers in my day as was *Making It*. The subtitle for an attack on the book in *Esquire* read, as I recall: "Norman Podhoretz's dirty little secret may not be all that dirty but it sure is little."

Some people have suggested that the crushing reviews *Making It* received helped push Podhoretz politically rightward. Perhaps. But the more decisive element in turning Norman Podhoretz were the events of the late 1960s and early seventies. Even in his leftist days, Podhoretz found the writers of the so-called Beat Movement—Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, et al.—third rate and, in their dedication to immaturity, not finally to be taken seriously. The drugging and political wildness represented by the coalition of students, old lefties, and liberal hangers-on that went by the name of the Movement he found even less congenial. Some of the menacing utterances about Israel on the part of the Black Panthers must have reminded him that the one thing the extreme left and the extreme right can always agree upon is hatred of the Jews.

Benjamin Balint has a Norman Podhoretz problem. He appears not to have been able to decide if Podhoretz is a good or bad hombre. The only clearly unequivocal thing he says about him is that he has "a marvelous baritone voice," which in fact he doesn't: He has the raspy voice of the ex-smoker, Camels, unfiltered, four packs a day. Balint's portrait of Podhoretz is of a figure of aggression: He uses words such as "hard-charging," "brusque," "pugnacious" to describe him. What Balint cannot quite make up his mind about is whether Norman Podhoretz is a main-chancer looking to promote himself through his magazine or, instead, a man of high principle devoted to his country, to fellow Jews round the world, and to staving off barbarians who, often during the years of his editorship of *Commentary* between 1960 and 1995, seemed not at but well inside the gates.

Podhoretz never disguised his ambition; *Making It* is proof of that. The question—a question Balint never gets around to answering satisfactorily—is what has been behind that ambition? I believe the right things have been behind Norman Podhoretz's ambition. Time after time, as editor of *Commentary*, he has taken up strong positions that went against the grain not of mainstream America but of mainstream American intellectual life. In "My Negro Problem—and Ours," an essay of 1963, Podhoretz pushed against black psychological bullying, which was to grow much more rampant and intense in the years ahead, and claimed that the most likely solution to the country's race problem was miscegenation. (Lo, today we have not a black but a biracial president; and indeed biracialism—not only of the black-and-white but of the Asian-Caucasian varieties—looks to be the order of the future.) He took on Hannah Arendt and her heartless book about Jews in the Holocaust, when sentiment among the *New York Review of Books* crowd went strongly the other way—and again he has been proven correct. He held *Commentary* to a strong anti-Communist line so long as communism—a truly evil empire, in case anyone failed to notice—continued to exist, even though so many among the old liberal anti-Communists gave way to the plague-on-both-your-houses politics of anti-anticommunism. He was early to label the current Western conflict with Islamic fundamentalism as World War IV (World War III was the Cold War), and in this, as we are learning, he was not wrong, either.

One of the striking changes in *Commentary* under Norman Podhoretz was that the magazine became more political and less cultural in its interests. This is all the more noteworthy since Podhoretz began his career as a literary critic. Irving Kristol, in his warning not to take up the editorship, told him that if he continued writing literary criticism, "you'll end up replacing Edmund Wilson in our pantheon." (Others warned that he would be the next Clifton Fadiman.) But of course, not even Edmund Wilson could have replaced Edmund Wilson, for literary culture has been slowly dying—choked off by academic idiocy, by politics, and by the blurring of high culture generally. Podhoretz's ambition required the larger arena of politics in which to exercise itself.

Not that *Commentary* was devoid of cultural interest. Robert Alter published serious literary criticism in the magazine; so did Ted Solotaroff and Cynthia Ozick (whose general importance to the magazine Balint overrates). For a

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brief while, a dazzling writer named Alfred Chester wrote memorable attacks on J.D. Salinger and John Updike and other pieces. Sam Lipman wrote brilliant music criticism for the magazine, Richard Grenier wrote in an insiderish way about the movies. Hilton Kramer wrote less regularly for the magazine but always powerfully about the visual arts.

Yet at a party at the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center, marking Norman Podhoretz's 25th anniversary as editor of *Commentary*, those who spoke about the significance of the magazine included George Shultz, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ed Koch, and Henry Kissinger. At this party I found myself at a table with Hilton Kramer, John Gross (editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*), Cynthia Ozick, Gerard Schwarz (conductor of the Seattle Symphony), and Sam Lipman. Midway through the dinner, with several Secret Service and other security men against the walls and near the entrances, Sam Lipman leaned over to me and said, "I see we are seated at the children's table." By which witty remark he meant, among other things, that culture was no longer central to the magazine.

Commentary remained very much a Jewish magazine. Of course, the plight of the Jews in America had changed radically from Elliot Cohen's editorship to Norman Podhoretz's—from the days of concern about anti-Semitism and assimilation in America to those of worry about too great assimilation ending in loss of Jewish identity through intermarriage. Elliot Cohen and many of the intellectuals who wrote for his magazine in its earliest days were not in favor of a Jewish state, Balint reports, though once Israel became a *fait accompli* they rallied to its defense. Under Norman Podhoretz's editorship, and later Neal Kozodoy's, the defense of Israel became a major priority.

I write "under Norman Podhoretz's editorship, and later Neal Kozodoy's"—but in fact the two were nearly coterminous. In 1966, at the age of 24, Kozodoy, who had been a graduate student at Columbia, had been hired as a sub-editor at *Commentary*. He soon developed a nearly perfect rapport with Norman Podhoretz such that, during all my years as a *Commentary* contributor, who dealt chiefly with Neal Kozodoy, I thought of the two men as co-editors. Kozodoy had the authority to make assignments and decisions on manuscripts as if he were himself the principal editor. If one disagreed with him, one never thought to take the matter to a higher authority because it didn't feel as if there were any higher authority. True, because he wrote more—Neal Kozodoy published little—and his name appeared atop the masthead, Norman Podhoretz receieved most of the glory the magazine attracted, and also most of the not inconsiderable contumely that came its way. In the late 1960s, I can recall more than one person asking me why I wrote for *Commentary*, "that vulgar magazine." "Vulgar" is the word intellectuals use when they really mean "vile," by which they actually mean in disagreement with their own views.

Neal Kozodoy was the principal editor of *Commentary* for 13 years. During that time, the magazine's line did not much change: Defense of Israel from its enemies (not all of whom bore Arab names), criticism of anti-Americanism and anti-Americans, attacks on thin culture passing itself off as serious, remained the order of the day. Plenty of room remained in the magazine for the nonpolitical: I was myself permitted to write in its pages during Kozodoy's editorship about Montaigne, John R. Tunis, life at the National Endowment for the Arts, and other not centrally political subjects. Kozodoy brought on board new contributors—David Gelernter, David Berlinski, Arthur Herman, Michael J. Lewis notable among them—and used some contributors (Terry Teachout, Hillel Halkin, Joshua Muravchik) more than Podhoretz did.

During Kozodoy's editorship, *Commentary* joined corporate independence to editorial independence by breaking away from the American Jewish Committee, and this imposed an additional fundraising burden that Kozodoy worked at sedulously and successfully. The chief difference between the Podhoretz and the Kozodoy editorships—under the latter the former continued to be a featured contributor—is that Neal Kozodoy retained his amazing, I would say heroic, self-effacement. He kept the magazine to the highest standard of seriousness and literary scrupulosity, and required no public recognition for his achievement.

In *Running Commentary*, Balint notes that I have published one hundred and thirty essays, stories, and reviews in *Commentary*. I would add that I never sent one of them off to the magazine without worrying about its acceptance, for under the editorships of Neal Kozodoy and Norman Podhoretz having been a frequent contributor or sharing their politics, or having a famous name, was never sufficient to guarantee publication in *Commentary*. The quality of what one wrote was always the chief element.

As the fourth editor of *Commentary* in its 65-year history, John Podhoretz, the son of Norman, is under the curse of what a friend of mine called the Brooks Robinson Factor. Robinson was the greatest fielding third baseman in the history of baseball, and his successor at third base for the Baltimore Orioles was an excellent ballplayer named Doug DeCinces. DeCinces might dive into the dugout in a superhuman effort to catch a foul ball; but if he missed, one Orioles fan was sure to turn to another and mutter, "Brooks would've had it." Whenever John Podhoretz attempts something new or different in *Commentary* many of the magazine's old-line readers are likely to mutter, "Neal [or Norman or even Elliot] would never have permitted it."

My sense is that John Podhoretz, the only editor of *Commentary* who comes to the job after working as a professional journalist, intends the tricky balancing

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act of making the magazine livelier without draining it of its seriousness. The magazine, let it be said, could become dour under its earlier editors—we have, after all, lived through some dark times—and the injection of a brighter note, if its current editor can bring it off without diluting the content and high editorial quality of the magazine, has to be viewed as a good and right thing.

The times make magazines more than magazines make the times. John Podhoretz takes up his editorship at a period when many of the old working assumptions of intellectual magazines no longer hold. One of the important tasks of the old intellectual journalism was, through its criticism of the arts, to serve as a stern gatekeeper, keeping out all that was shoddy, thin, ersatz. In 1958 Dwight Macdonald wrote an essay in *Commentary* called "By Cozzens Possessed" that put a dent in the literary reputation of James Gould Cozzens from which it has yet to recover. I remember being with Saul Bellow and Harold Rosenberg as they agreed that Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* was passable as blue stand-up comedy, but had no real standing as literature. How useful it would be today to have critics who might let it be known that what passes for great writing, serious art, beautiful music, shouldn't be allowed to pass at all. Without strong intellectual journalism, the culture is all the more likely to lapse—actually, it long ago lapsed—into what Santayana called "a second-class standard of firstness."

Benjamin Balint has a Norman Podhoretz problem. He appears not to have been able to decide if Podhoretz is a good or bad hombre. The only clearly unequivocal thing he says about him is that he has 'a marvelous baritone voice,' which in fact he doesn't: He has the raspy voice of the ex-smoker, Camels, unfiltered, four packs a day.

As the bar for High Culture has been taken down, so has the old intellectual journalistic approach to politics changed. When he began his intellectual journal the *Criterion*, T.S. Eliot said that it was committed to a conservative program but would be hostage to no party. Many years later Dwight Macdonald, in describing the two major American parties, called them Tweedledumb and Tweedledumber. American politics seemed too trivial for the capacious minds of the intellectuals of Macdonald's generation; American politicians were mainly crooks and clowns—case closed. The intellectuals of that day dreamt of socialism and dabbled in revolution. Of course, it came to nothing more than dreaming and dabbling, but it gave a feeling of grandeur.

"In general," Balint writes, "an imaginative impoverishment seem to set in [at *Commentary*] as Podhoretz led the magazine deeper into neoconservative sensibility." Norman Podhoretz and Neal Kozodoy probably had less choice than they might have realized in taking *Commentary* further out into the heavy political waters that led the magazine to become one of the spearheads of neoconservatism. With America under intellectual attack at home, Israel under military threat abroad, anti-Semitism on the rise in Europe, educational and intellectual and artistic standards slipping everywhere, where else could the magazine honorably have gone but into the defending or conserving mode that has been at the heart of neoconservatism.

The chief problem facing John Podhoretz in his editorship of the current-day *Commentary*, I would say, is not the distraction of the Internet or the isolation of neoconservatism, but how to run an intellectual magazine without genuine intellectuals. For it is far from clear that we even have intellectuals any longer—at least not in the old sense of men and women living on and for ideas, imbued with high culture, willing to sacrifice financially to live the undeterred life of the mind. Intellectuals of the kind that T.S. Eliot sought as contributors to the *Criterion*—Ortega y Gasset, Paul Valéry, E.R. Curtius, Arthur Eddington—no longer exist. Nor do the intellectuals, of lesser fame and distinction, who helped fill Elliot Cohen's pages.

Instead, we have so-called *public* intellectuals, a very different, much less impressive, type, whom I have always thought should be called Publicity Intellectuals. Public intellectual is another term for talking head—men and women who have newspaper columns or blogs or appear regularly on television and radio talk shows and comment chiefly on politicians and political programs; they tend to be articulate without any sign of being cultured, already lined and locked up politically, and devoted to many things, but the disinterested pursuit of the truth not among them. Frank Rich is a public intellectual, so too are Andrew Sullivan and Christopher Hitchens and Dinesh D'Souza.

At the end of his book, Balint describes the neoconservatives "gathered around *Commentary* [as] both chosen and reviled, both vanguard and anomaly. For all their prominence, they found themselves isolated, a minority of a minority." I should put it rather differently. The neoconservatives gathered around *Commentary* are a minority among the majority of standard Jewish liberals, they are reviled by leftist *bien pensants*, and they are an anomaly in not caring about being in intellectual or political fashion. Not the least dishonor that I can detect attaches to any of these conditions. ♦

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Henry Irving as Iachimo, Ellen Terry as Imogen, in 'Cymbeline'

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION / CORBIS

Victorian Triangle

The drama wasn't always onstage

BY EDWARD SHORT

For 24 years, Ellen Terry and Henry Irving conducted one of the most beloved and successful partnerships the theater has ever known—an impressive run by any measure, though it was too long for Bernard Shaw, who felt Terry had wasted her talent by working with an actor who sentimentalized Shakespeare and preferred melodrama to Ibsen. Considering "the originality and modernity" of Terry's talent, Shaw was certain "that it would have been better for us 25 years ago to have tied [Irving] up in a sack with every existing copy of the works of Shakespeare, and dropped him into the crater of the nearest volcano."

Edward Short is a writer in New York.

A Strange Eventful History
The Dramatic Lives of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, and Their Remarkable Families
by Michael Holroyd
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 620 pp., $40

As Michael Holroyd shows in this joint biography of the Irving and Terry families, Shaw objected not only to the actor-manager in Irving: He also resented the man. Irving never mounted any of Shaw's plays, and Shaw, despite reams of witty love letters, never budged Terry from her devotion to the aloof, imperious, driven man whom his colleagues called "the Guv'nor."

The groundwork for the Irving/Terry partnership was laid in 1871 when the then-manager of the Lyceum, Hezekiah Bateman of Baltimore, hired Irving to play the lead beside his actress daughters, a last throw of the dice for a stage father on the brink of bankruptcy. It was only after Irving persuaded him to mount *The Bells*, which proved a huge success, that Bateman escaped ruin. In 1874 Irving followed with a production of *Hamlet*, which secured his reputation as England's foremost actor. As *The Times* noted, Irving's Hamlet owed little to Macready or Kean: He was "a prince and gentleman who failed to do the great things demanded of him, not so much from weakness of will as from excess of tenderness." In 1878, to crown his success, Irving took over the management of the

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Lyceum and hired Terry as his leading lady, with whom he would work until 1902. Together they mounted spectacular productions of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, and *Cymbeline*, as well as such romantic melodramas as *Olivia* (based on Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*) and *The Lady of Lyons*.

Henry Irving, whose real name was John Brodribb, was brought up by his aunt in Cornwall, a wild place in the 19th century reachable only by steamboat. Seeing itinerant players enacting bloodcurdling melodramas in the Cornish hills inspired Irving to become a player himself. When reunited with his parents at age 11, he developed a severe stammer, made worse by his mother's insistence that he become a Methodist preacher. Before appearing on the London stage, he put in a punishing 700 performances in the provinces, where he was often hissed at for his crab-like gait and odd verbal tics. He was the antithesis of an overnight success.

Irving's decision to go on the stage so scandalized his Methodist mother that she disowned him. Later, when Irving married Florence O'Callaghan, the daughter of an Irish surgeon-general in the India service, she, too, disapproved of his acting. Riding with her husband in a hansom cab one evening, she demanded that he stop making a fool of himself and quit the stage. Irving calmly got out of the cab and never saw her again. For the sake of his social standing, however, he never divorced her. Florence, for her part, never missed Irving's first nights, though she brought up her sons to regard their father as a bounder and to refer to his leading lady as "the wench."

Ellen Terry was born into a famous theatrical family and had her London debut at the age of nine playing the prince Mamillius in Kean's production of *The Winter's Tale*. By the time she was a teenager, she was an accomplished comedienne. Even more striking than her perennial youthfulness was her voice, "that most sweet voice," as Holroyd describes it, "half-whisper and half sigh, which enchanted everyone: a soft, veiled, husky, intimate, thrilling sound, mysterious in its power." Irving was fond of saying that Terry was fatal to criticism because she turned her critics into lovers, but it was not only critics who fell in love with her. In 1864, when she was 16, the 46-year-old Pre-Raphaelite painter G. F. Watts became so infatuated with her that he married her. Tennyson, Disraeli, Browning, and Wilde all flocked to Little Holland House to call upon the enrapturing child bride. Johnston Forbes-Robertson, the most dashing of the Edwardian actor-managers, had a crush on Terry from the moment he set eyes on her. Bram Stoker, Irving's major domo and the author of *Dracula* (which was based on Irving), recalled Terry moving "through the world of the theatre like embodied sunshine." Even Gladstone, who learned some of his oratorical tricks from Irving, found Terry irresistible.

Ellen Terry at 16 (1863)

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In 1868, after her separation from Watts, Edward Godwin, the architect and interior designer, whom Max Beerbohm called "the greatest aesthete of them all," fell in love with Terry while she was on tour. Within months, they ran away to Hertfordshire and had two children, Gordon (called Ted) and Edy, both of whom took the surname Craig. Their strange and eventful histories dominate the second half of this book. How the children of the famous come to grief does not always make for riveting reading. Still, Holroyd treats the children of both his primary subjects with admirable sympathy. Moreover, their failure casts an interesting light on the success of their parents. Terry never deceived herself on this score: "What fools we are in bringing up our children!"

Holroyd describes Godwin as "a man with a visionary future but no actual present," which could also describe his talented, undisciplined son. Terry's love for Godwin was never entirely reciprocated: As Holroyd observes, Godwin "was a romantic, living off his nerves, seeing in her beauty an image of what he passionately desired, but never losing for long his mysterious discontent." In Holroyd's biography, it is not so much love as love thwarted that binds together his different subjects.

Irving was in many respects a cold, cruel, egomaniacal man who delighted in making others suffer the same denial of love that he had suffered at the hands of his mother. He took no interest in his sons when they were growing up and hardly noticed when Laurence, his younger son, tried to kill himself. Harry, the older son, complained to his mother: "I wonder why Irving avoids writing to us. . . . Of course we have heard nothing from our affectionate father. . . .

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It would be a good thing if we could make the old cab-horse take a little trouble." Irving also kept Terry at a distance: "He knew only one way out of his isolation," Holroyd observed, "and that was by turning it to some use, even to grim enjoyment upon the stage." Nevertheless, despite his personal limitations, Terry loved Irving. As Holroyd remarks, she "loved his unpainted face, that splendid face he wished to hide." One reason Terry was drawn to Irving's isolation was that it was so different from her own blithe gregariousness.

Throughout her later years, Terry agonized over her son's fecklessness. "Talk—and not do," she wrote him in one gently remonstrating letter: "It's bad in a woman but terrible in a man." Despite the extravagant claims Holroyd makes for his influence on set design and film lighting, Craig was an unsavory pseud, whose delusions of grandeur drew him to Mussolini and Hitler. "Gordon Craig has made himself the most famous producer in Europe," Shaw quipped, "by dint of never producing anything, while Edith Craig remains the most obscure by dint of producing everything." Edy's career both as a costumier and a director was far more productive than her brother's, though her personal life was blighted by her mother's overprotectiveness. One revelation here is that England's sweetheart was no model mother.

In 1905, after Irving died, Terry married an American actor 30 years her junior. Edy found his youth ludicrous—he was younger than she was—while Ted welcomed him, convinced that he would shed ten years off his own life. "How wonderful," he wrote his mother after hearing of the nuptials: "We are a queer family." This was putting it mildly. Terry might have kept her relations with Irving carefully veiled but Ted would go on to have 13 children with eight women and Edy established a lesbian colony in Kent that even Vita Sackville-West found *outré*.

When Shaw looked back at Irving and Terry's long run at the Lyceum, he saw "twenty years' steady cultivation of the actor as a personal force, and [the] utter neglect of the drama." Shaw could have pointed to Irving's passing over not only his own work but that of Ibsen, Wilde, Barrie, Pinero, and Henry Arthur Jones. It was not until after Irving's death that the balance between actor and drama was realigned—though this was achieved by a generation of actors, directors, and playwrights who prized Irving and Terry, seeing them as the bridge between David Garrick and Sarah Siddons and Gielgud and Olivier.

When Irving married Frances O'Callaghan, she disapproved of his acting. Riding with her husband in a hansom cab one evening, she demanded that he stop making a fool of himself and quit the stage. Irving calmly got out of the cab and never saw her again.

That he should be the first actor in England to be knighted amused Irving. Max Beerbohm, seeing him on his way to the station on the day he was honored at Windsor Castle, recalled:

> His hat was tilted at more than his usual angle and his long cigar seemed longer than ever, and on his face was a look of such ruminant sly fun as I have never seen equaled. I had a moment's glimpse of him; but that was enough to show me the soul of a comedian revelling in the part he was about to play. I was sure that when he alighted on the platform of Paddington his bearing would be more than ever grave and stately with even the usual touch of bohemianism obliterated.

In his biographies of Lytton Strachey, Augustus John, and Shaw, Michael Holroyd gave bohemianism center stage. Here he explores something far stranger than bohemia, and that is family life, about which he writes with considerable eloquence. Irving's instinct, so alert in theatrical affairs, was blind to the nuances of personal relationships. He simply did not know what Florence was thinking or feeling and could not pick up signs from how she looked or clues from her tone of voice. She was again pregnant, but her husband's time and energy were devoted to his work. The truth was inescapable: Irving loved the theater far more than her, their son, and their unborn child. He placed a world of bright lights above the needs of his family. She had come to realize that there was something fundamentally wrong with him and, with surprise and consternation, Florence found that she could not change him, could not penetrate the solitude he carried within himself or match his single passion for the stage.

As she waited outside the Lyceum in her brougham after the first performance of *The Bells*, waited in mounting irritation for him to detach himself from the braying crowds within, and heard the chorus of fatuous adulation spilling out on to the streets, her anger rose. Tired almost beyond endurance, anxious to get home, convinced that her husband had forgotten her pregnancy, she was nevertheless obliged to go on to a celebratory supper and hear him praised by people who had no knowledge of the real Irving. No one else knew what he was like. The boredom, injustice, and mockery of it were too much for her. And here Holroyd proves his mastery anew by heeding what Henry James called "the ever-importunate murmur, 'Dramatize it, dramatize it!'" That James also happened to be Irving's most relentless critic, finding his productions blatant and crude, is another story. ♦

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B&A

Think Pink

A Brat Packer confronts the spectre of middle age.

BY KARI BARBIC

Jon Cryer, Molly Ringwald in 'Pretty in Pink' (1986)

Molly Ringwald turned 40 a couple of years ago and realized, much to her dismay, that there just wasn't a book out there to bring her through this uncharted land.

She searched high and low, and behold, there was no sufficient manual on how to feel truly pretty. Molly was looking for a helpful guide that focused on embracing fun and style, a book "about being a woman, rather than a girl." Her solution to this conundrum? She would write that guidebook! In *Getting the Pretty Back: Friendship, Family, and Finding the Perfect Lipstick*, Molly Ringwald does her best to pack all her wit and wisdom into a fully illustrated book which (in the author's words) is "about everything [she's] learned, thus far, and how to put it together and incorporate it all."

Getting the Pretty Back
Friendship, Family, and Finding the Perfect Lipstick
by Molly Ringwald
It Books, 240 pp., $25.99

This slender volume is narrated in a way that makes the reader feel as though she has sat down for a chat with Molly herself. Molly liberally shares stories from her personal experiences while tactfully avoiding celebrity gossip: That's not what being pretty is all about. While Molly does well at staying on the lighter side of life with her comfortable conversational tone, her narrative does feel scattered at times, as though it's trying to be everything at once. Much like a collection of special edition Hallmark cards, each chapter touches on a different aspect of prettiness, and before getting too deep or personal, flits on to the next topic.

The advice may be slightly disjointed but the motive is pure: Molly just wants to help her girlfriends out there. The hope is that, somehow through the assortment of advice, anecdotes, and lists, each reader will return to the inner pretty Molly herself has regained. What is this inner pretty? Do not confuse it with the more familiar concept of inner beauty: Pretty is "an attitude towards life . . . a sense of self that never entirely leaves." A little vague, maybe, but let us move on to how we can acquire this elusive "pretty."

"Getting the pretty back is about getting back in touch with your essential self: the part of you that knows what you really want." How do you get in touch with that essential self? Step one: Be pretty on the outside. From hairstyles to handbags, Molly shares all the fashion wisdom she has gleaned over the years. Of course, we should not judge Molly too harshly for starting with outer rather than inner pretty; any woman picking up a book with "pretty" in the title should expect some Top Ten lists of generic beauty and styling tips. (Molly's tips are not necessarily new revelations but they *are* practical and reasonable.) She also gives a little insight to style choices in her film career, such as mentioning the infamous pink prom dress from *Pretty in Pink* and claiming that she must have been "tired that day" when she made that decision. Movie wardrobes aside, Molly doesn't want us to forget that she is pretty much "just like the rest of us" and, therefore, avoids devoting too many words that dwell on the celebrity aspects of her person. We are quickly ushered on to find our pretty in our individuality and common experiences.

In addition to fashion and beauty, Molly explores the complexities and joys of friendship, dating, marriage, and singleness. After pages of lists describing the best friend-date places, things to do when you break up, top reasons it can be fabulous to be single, and play lists for the soundtrack of life, it's hard to gauge if you should be feeling pretty yet or just pouring yourself a glass of wine and calling it a day. No worries on that front: Molly is ready to dispense her knowledge of wine and cheese and bread. Using her time spent living and working in France, she highlights her

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culinary expertise with recipes and hostessing tips. At this point, the reader may wonder why Molly didn't write a book solely on this topic since she clearly has a passion for food. She tells us outright: "When I die, I don't intend to have it written on my grave 'She was skinny.' I would much prefer 'She mastered the soufflé.'"

Molly nears the end of the journey back to pretty by discussing motherhood. This, her most entertaining chapter, is positioned well as one of the final chapters since it focuses on her newest and expanding role, now as a mother of three. Molly clearly loves being a mom, and playing one on TV, and her anecdotes from adventures in mommyhood show a colorful, new facet of the grown up Brat Pack alum. As Molly herself would remind us, this parental slice of life is just another part of "embracing [her] essential self," and regardless of what she does next on her journey, Molly will presumably search deep inside and reach for what truly makes her pretty. ♦

B&A

Classical America

How early America was indebted to Rome.

BY DAVID WHARTON

The National Constitution Center's exhibition gathers impressive Old and New World artifacts that evoke America's cultural debt to Rome and invite us to contemplate our own national character. The sheer variety of antiquities makes this show unique; where else can you see tea leaves from the Boston Tea Party in the same show as a Roman gladiator's mask? The exhibit would be worth visiting just to see its fine Roman, Etruscan, and early American antiquities, but the juxtaposition of related ancient and American pieces adds to its strength.

Ancient Rome and America
The National Constitution Center
Independence Mall, Philadelphia
Through August 1

The exhibit falls into three sections. On entering the first, "Building a Republic," we are greeted by the fragmentary head of a Roman legionary eagle next to a carved and gilded early American eagle, both with impressively bellicose expressions. The point is clear: Both nations chose the same animal as their national symbols because they saw in them similar virtues of strength and courage. But did Congress choose the eagle *because* of its Roman connections? We aren't told, although it's worth noting that Congress rejected two previous proposals for our Great Seal, one of which, at Benjamin Franklin's suggestion, showed Moses overcoming Pharaoh at the Red Sea.

This section also includes several of the Founders' personal copies of classical texts, hinting at the intellectual ties between the Founders and the ancients. Most people today would be amazed at how thoroughly steeped in classical literature our Founders were; college entrance exams at the time required applicants to translate several pages of Cicero's orations or Virgil's *Aeneid* at sight, to compose competently in Latin prose (and sometimes in verse), and to know the basics of ancient Greek grammar. Once admitted, they continued their Greek and Latin studies for three or four years. Some, like Jefferson, kept reading in the original Latin and Greek all their lives.

A first edition of the *Federalist* is also here, and the accompanying text notes that Hamilton, Madison, and Jay liked to sign their papers "Publius," expecting their readers to catch the reference to Publius Valerius Publicola, a lawgiver of the early Roman republic. The *Federalist* is salted with dozens of references to ancient politics, which they and their readers took seriously as models, both good and bad, for their new republic. For example, in *Federalist* 63, "Publius" (probably Hamilton or Madison) argues for the necessity of an appointed senate in the Constitution:

> It adds no small weight to all these considerations, to recollect that history informs us of no long-lived republic which had not a senate. Sparta, Rome, and Carthage are, in fact, the only states to whom that character can be applied. . . . These examples, though as unfit for the imitation, as they are repugnant to the genius of America, are, notwithstanding, when compared with the fugitive and turbulent existence of other ancient republics, very instructive proofs of the necessity of some institution that will blend stability with liberty.

The middle section of the exhibit, "A Classical Revival," focuses more on the aesthetic than the political, and we get glimpses of how Roman sensibilities seeped into American domestic life. One of the more charming pieces of Americana on display is an embroidered silk picture on linen which shows two young women as muses, one holding a trumpet in her left hand while writing history with her right, the other painting what appears to be a portrait of George Washington. Above them floats, cherub-like, a strange gilt-embroidered eagle, and in the background stands a neoclassical building which is clearly not an ancient structure. Young Sarah Skinner Ward made this as a school exercise, not only to show off her knowledge and skill, but also to lend an aura of classical prestige and enchantment to early American society. (Of course this impulse did not die after the 18th century: Consider how delightfully Meredith Willson lampooned aspiring classical culture in small-town middle America with the River City dance troupe's absurd tableaux of Grecian urns in *The Music Man*.)

Early Americans also paid homage to the Romans and glorified themselves through their use of Roman-style por-

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trait sculpture. Scattered throughout the galleries, along with many ancient Roman portrait busts, are renditions of Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, John Marshall, and Henry Clay, all sporting togas. To a modern audience, whose most famous togate figure is probably John Belushi wearing a knotted bedsheet in *Animal House*, the iconography probably seems a bit absurd, but for most 18th- and 19th-century viewers, it surely added gravitas.

Roman influence sometimes made its way into American life via the Grand Tour, when young American elites visited European sites including Pompeii and Herculaneum. Here they absorbed Roman art and architecture and brought home notions of aesthetic sophistication with which they could emulate their Continental cousins. Classical motifs crept into clothing, jewelry, and furniture, and the exhibit has fine examples of each. One beautifully crafted American couch stands beneath an ancient relief sculpture of Romans at mealtime reclining on dining couches; the American version clearly imitates the form of the Roman, even though that form is entirely impractical for American uses. This section also includes some rare Roman jewelry, an elaborately wrought, massive silver cup from Pompeii, and a large Etruscan sarcophagus.

Perhaps the most affecting items on display are two slave collars. The Roman one, made of a thin strip of bronze and engraved with instructions on how to return the escaped slave, looks almost like a piece of jewelry next to a (very rare) American version made of heavy wrought iron for a three-time Pennsylvania escapee named Ben. Ben's collar has spike-like grips on either side, presumably for holding or subduing him.

The final section, "Expansion and Empire," does not show direct connections so much as suggest related tendencies of both societies. On one poster, Eero Saarinen's Gateway Arch in St. Louis is depicted along with the Arch of Titus near the Roman Forum. This is an arresting combination, and one at which I bristled at first: The Arch of Titus is, after all, an explicit glorification of brutal imperial violence, commemorating the sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. One of its relief panels shows the treasures of the Jewish Temple being plundered by Roman soldiers. Surely the Gateway Arch is entirely more benign. And yet the juxtaposition invites reflection. The opening of the West to trade and settlement, which the arch commemorates, also entailed some brutal military operations—although it is to our credit that we didn't glorify them with relief sculptures as the Romans surely would have done. The modernist design of Saarinen's arch glorifies our love of enterprise and innovation, whereas the Arch of Titus stands squarely in an old Roman tradition of the glorification of military conquest.

Still, why were the architectural panel of judges drawn to the arch design? The runner-up was a massive vertical slab.

A dual display of a beautifully preserved gladiator's helmet and a Philadelphia Eagles football helmet is similarly provocative, but other items in this section, which compare Roman and American technology, weaponry, and religion are less so. Still, in its entirety, this show is remarkable, and invites us to explore more deeply the connections between ancient Rome and America at which it can only hint. ♦

B&A

Guilt-Edged Tale

A contemporary crime awakens historical memory.

BY ABBY WISSE SCHACHTER

What does a reader expect from a Holocaust-themed novel by the world's most famous survivor of Auschwitz? Perhaps nothing more than that the survivor, Elie Wiesel, provide some reflections on what it means to survive, on what it means to remember. If so, Wiesel's new novel is worth reading—plus, there's a murder mystery thrown in for a bit of drama.

The Sonderberg Case
by Elie Wiesel
Knopf, 192 pp., $25

If, on the other hand, one would like to think that a great man, and Wiesel is a great man, should produce a great novel, then *The Sonderberg Case* is a disappointment. The story does deal with the legacy of the *churban* of European Jewry—and interestingly, it's not just Jewish memory we're talking about here. Wiesel takes up the impact of the horror on a German who is too young to have been involved but who has close ties to it and lives with a feeling of guilt by association. But as a novel, this just isn't one of Wiesel's best.

It shifts perspective and jumps around in time, mostly to little effect. Both techniques are used to weave together two stories: One is about Werner Sonderberg, a young German studying at a New York university, who stands accused of killing his older German uncle while the two were visiting the Adirondacks. The other story, which takes up more of the novel, is about a Jew named Yedidyah, a theater critic at a New York newspaper who is asked to cover the Sonderberg trial.

Yedidyah loves his father, grandfather, and uncle, but he has trouble understanding them; he loves his wife and two sons, even as he periodically feels at a distance from them. He loves the theater, but when it becomes clear he has no future as an active participant, he becomes a drama critic. When he tells his father about his new job, the father's response is this: "Do you know the difference between a writer and a journalist? The journalist defines himself by what he says and the writer by what he doesn't say." Yedidyah is confused: "Was he happy about my success? I had no idea."

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Yedidyah's story becomes even more complex when he discovers that the American Jewish family he thought was his own is, in fact, his adoptive family. He learns that he was born to European Jewish parents and that he had an older brother, all of whom were destroyed in the Holocaust. As a baby, Yedidyah was rescued by a Christian woman and then placed at a refugee camp after the war so that he could be adopted by other Jews. When Yedidyah is given the Sonderberg trial as an assignment, he finds himself thinking about the man being judged. He is confused about a defendant who insists on pleading "guilty and not guilty." At the trial, he observes the jury and concludes:

> What if I were one of them? What if the fate and honor of the young German were in my hands? A dangerous, dishonest thought: it would lead me where I won't allow myself to tread. Like that other bizarre thought that crosses my mind: could I possibly be the one in the dock? Could I be, as he is, the murderer of an old German, a witness to those horrible crimes? A participant even?

But Yedidyah concludes that he could never be on that side of the equation: "I quickly dismiss the thought. I'm not Werner Sonderberg or his double. I'm me."

Wiesel seems as passionate about trying to get into the mind of the German as his protagonist. Yedidyah asks, "Could I be, as [Sonderberg] is, the murderer of an old German, a witness to those horrible crimes?" Wiesel seems to be asking what would (or should) a young German's answer be to that same question. If confronted by an uncle, a father, or grandfather, who was not only a witness but an active participant, and maybe not just an active participant but one who justifies his actions in your name, in the name of the next German generation, would you exact justice by throwing that person off a cliff?

Unfortunately, in answering these questions in the way he does, Wiesel further weakens his story. Instead of a complicated and morally questionable resolution, we get a neat and tidy package of justification of the Nazi cause by the older generation and then complete rejection by the younger. Is it really that simple? Indeed, Wiesel is much better at embodying living memory than trying to capture the same ideas in a novel. He puts the following words in Yedidyah's mouth: "How was I to reconcile Auschwitz and Jerusalem? Would the former merely be the antithesis, the anti-event of the latter? If Auschwitz is forever the question; is Jerusalem forever the answer?"

Wiesel provided his own answer, and delivered his verdict much more powerfully, in his recently published full-page advertisement about the Jews' eternal capital than in the novel. As Wiesel declared, following President Obama's very public rebuke of Israeli building plans in Jerusalem, "The anguish over Jerusalem is not about real estate but about memory. . . . It belongs to the Jewish people and is much more than a city, it is what binds one Jew to another. . . . Jerusalem is the heart of our heart, the soul of our soul."

The difficulty with being the living embodiment of modern Jewish memory is that you can overstep your boundaries. After publishing his plea for Jerusalem, the administration reached out to Wiesel in an effort to fix its image problem with American Jews. President Obama invited Wiesel to lunch, and the two Nobel laureates were photographed eating a kosher meal together. Wiesel was right to agree to the meeting, but he went beyond his role when, afterwards, he pronounced all tensions dissolved between the Jews and the administration.

It is not for Elie Wiesel to pass judgment on serious policy differences between Israel and the Obama administration, nor is it his role to "decide" that American Jews have nothing to worry about with this president. It was more than enough for him to seize the mantle of conscience. ♦

B&A

Saint Joan

There's more laughter than martyrdom in a storied career. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

A new documentary called *Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work* is being hailed as a remarkable look at show business life, at the sacrifices and pains and difficulties and distortions that pursuing a career of fame and fortune in the spotlight requires. Perhaps you didn't know, but it's really very hard to have to take lots of private planes to Indian casinos to make hundreds of thousands of dollars, or be the subject of a Comedy Central "roast" for which, we are told, "the money is extraordinary."

Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work
Directed by Ricki Stern and Anne Sundberg

The only proper response to this movie's effort to derive sympathy for Joan Rivers's supposedly difficult life is: Oh, go soak your head. So she's had troubles, even big troubles. Big deal. Everyone has troubles. She's world-famous, filthy rich, doing what she loves and driven to do it, and at 75, has her health and memory and the stamina of someone half her age. Directors Ricki Stern and Anne Sundberg attempt to create an image of deep pathos because Rivers is so busy she has to check in at a hotel at 3 o'clock in the morning and ask not to be awakened before 6 A.M. She doesn't like her Indian casino hotel room, to which she has flown on a private jet from Palm Springs. Boo-hoo.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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What Joan Rivers does have is what makes this movie very much worth seeing: an astonishing, raging, unstoppable comic gift. She is bitterly, furiously, compulsively, and continuously funny. Rivers has thousands and thousands of jokes she herself has written on 3x5 file cards lining a wall in her palatial residence on 64th Street just east of Fifth Avenue. But she doesn't need them; the movie shows her riffing conversationally from morning until night, practically unable to speak a sentence that doesn't work somehow as a joke. This is so much the case that when the camera catches her saying something in earnest you keep waiting in vain for the vicious punch line to undercut the sentiment.

Comedians are not necessarily naturally funny people. Steve Martin's remarkable memoir, *Born Standing Up*, is an account of a man so intelligent that he was able to break comedy down into its constituent parts and learn how to perform it despite being entirely bereft of an innate sense of humor. It was said of Jack Benny, one of the great comedians, that he couldn't tell a joke to save his life; his best friend George Burns, who was a straight man until his surprising old-age career after the age of 80, would spend his days at the Hillcrest Country Club making everyone around him laugh until they could barely breathe.

Rivers herself wanted to be an actress and spent some time at Second City as an improviser and sketch performer. But it was only when she surrendered to her God-given ability to slam home a kicker in her late twenties that she found her true calling. The startling aggression she showed, first toward herself as a young woman and then toward celebrities as she found her voice in middle age, was something astounding to behold from this pretty little slip of a thing who talked about herself as though she were a hideous hag.

It turns out we didn't know the half of it. In *A Piece of Work*, we get a side of Rivers that only those who have seen her perform in person know: a comic as blue as the voters of the District of Columbia, whose lines and asides are so foul it's nearly impossible even to hint at them. The movie opens with Rivers on stage revealing how her daughter Melissa sought her approval for refusing to appear topless in *Playboy* for $400,000. Rivers, who will say just about anything, then says the last and most disgusting thing you would expect to hear—and I have to say, it's so incredibly transgressive that it's hilarious.

CHARLES MILLER; SETH KEAL

The movie is structured as a year in Rivers's life, moving from a career trough to a career high point. The structure is nonsense; there's no indication, aside from a scene in which she shows an empty calendar, that she's going begging for work. She's clearly very busy, and her agent and manager both talk about how she will do anything and go anywhere and perform in front of anyone and advertise anything, including devices for male sexual enhancement. And it's a little hard to believe that being the "winner" of Donald Trump's *Celebrity Apprentice* is more of a triumph for her than being the subject of the Comedy Central roast, which happens in the middle of the movie.

The yearlong arc of *A Piece of Work* is another example of how manipulative and false the nominally more "real" documentary form can be. Documentaries need plots just as any movie does, but real lives don't have plots, not even Joan Rivers's life, and the imposition of one is as false as any melodramatic twist on *Desperate Housewives*. The reason this movie made it into theaters, and is getting wildly enthusiastic reviews, and might even be something you will go and see if you can tolerate the obscenity and the profanity, is simple: It's side-splitting.

It's also a little boring in spots, but that's to be expected. Movies with highs as intense as the ones created when Rivers goes into one of her rants need to give their viewers a little down time until Old Faithful goes off again. ♦

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"What has defined us as a nation since our founding is the capacity to shape our destiny—our determination to fight for the America we want for our children. Even if we're unsure exactly what that looks like. Even if we don't yet know precisely how we're going to get there."
—President Barack Obama, June 15, 2010

THE BOOK OF PRESIDENTIAL QUOTATIONS

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, even though they weren't precisely sure what kind of nation it would be, or if it were really a "nation" in the accepted sense of the term.

—Abraham Lincoln, November 19, 1863

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, trying to decide what it is he wants to do, and whether he has any idea in the first place how he is going to accomplish what he wants to do.

—Theodore Roosevelt, April 23, 1910

This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that as soon as we decide what the conditions in our country really are, based on what the experts tell us, we can get down to the serious business of figuring out how we're going to deal with those conditions.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933

First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon, and then once we have safely deposited him there, of consulting the experts we have assembled to advise us on what, exactly, we want him to do on the moon, or for the moon, or even to the moon, depending on the best advice we can get at this time.

—John F. Kennedy, May 25, 1961

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